PANCHAYATI RAJ IN RAJASTHAN

A Case Study in Jaipur District

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New Delhi

THE PROJECT TEAM AT WORK

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Foreword

WE have great pleasure in placing the report on the working of panchayati raj in a district of Rajasthan in the hands of our readers The report embodies the result of field research which was spread over a period of about two years The study has been made possible with the financial assistance of the National Institute of Community Development to which the University of Rajasthan in general and the Department of Economics & Public Administration in particular are grateful

The Department of Economics & Public Administration which is one of the oldest departments of the University has all along been interested in field research It has believed that social scientists have to contribute in good measure to the success of governmental and non-governmental projects in socio economic fields through research and evaluational studies, besides making available their expertise for applied uses This becomes all the more pertinent in the context of a developing country like India which is pursuing a challenging ideal in its attempt to combine democracy with planning The social scientist has to assist the government through his empirical researches in meeting the exacting demands of the challenge, particularly because a country like ours has to telescope the economic fruits of Industrial Revolution of a hundred years or so in as short a period as possible and as such cannot afford to waste its scarce resources in man and material It was this pragmatic view of the role of the social scientist which motivated the Department in sponsoring the Panchayati Raj Research Project

It may also be recalled here that Rajasthan was the first State

to launch panchayati raj on the model of the blueprint suggested by the Balwantray Mehta report. It was certainly a bold step for a State which has been politically backward on account of its feudal lineage. In fact, Rajasthan had to start from a scratch in its onward march towards the goal of political and socio-economic democracy. And panchayati raj has been a courageous step forward in the process of political evolution towards the democratic ideal. The political leaders, the government officials and the academicians were swinging between hope and fear while the bold step was being taken. In spite of the handicaps associated with its feudal heritage, there was possibly one advantage that Rajasthan could derive. The back log of antiquated traditions was not there to deter its progress. It could write on a clean slate and as such was in a position to establish healthy democratic traditions. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that an academic enquiry should have been launched to identify the gains and shortfalls of panchayati raj in Rajasthan which according to some had taken a reckless plunge in its effort to take a lead in experimenting with democratic decentralisation.

We are conscious of the fact that three or four years in the life of an institution like panchayati raj is too short a period to admit any reliable analysis by way of a final verdict. The *rationale* behind the launching of the 'project' had been that it should pay dividends in terms of a healthy and vigorous growth of democracy at local rural levels if emerging problem areas pertaining to panchayati raj were identified on the basis of an empirical academic enquiry in the initial stages of its life, and if an effort was also made to offer solutions to the problems so identified. It was with this motivation of *constructive criticism* that the 'project' was sponsored. It is in this spirit that the enquiry has all through been conducted.

The idea of the 'project' was broached by Shri Chakervarty, I.C.S. (Secretary, Ministry of Community Development & Cooperation; formerly Principal of National Institute of Community Development), in one of his visits to Jaipur. I am beholden to him for the suggestion and for his continued interest in the 'project' work. The initial outline of the proposed study was drawn up in consultation with late Dr. D.L. Gupta, Reader in Economics, University of Rajasthan, and with the help of Shri K.L. Baraya, I.A.S. and Dr. V.M. Sinha, Lecturer in Public Administration. It is regretted that Dr. Gupta's association with the 'project' was

unfortunately cut short owing to his sad demise before the actual enquiry could even be launched Yet the imprint of his close insight in rural economics had been there on the final project outline and it had guided us all through

The Panchayati Raj Research Project commenced its active operations from June 1, 1961 when Dr Iqbal Narain joined as Deputy Director Soon after, he took to organising the project office, establishing a nucleus library and recruiting the research officers who were exposed to a three months' 'study and acquaintance programme' in the areas where they had to work The field operations started only from November 1, 1961

After the receipt of the financial grant from the National Institute of Community Development & Research an Advisory Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Dr Mohan Sinha Mehta, Vice Chancellor, University of Rajasthan to evolve guidelines as also to render advice from time to time in the working of the 'project' Besides the Chairman and Honorary Director the Advisory Committee consisted of the following members

Shri B Mehta, Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan

Shri Ram Singh, Joint Development Commissioner, Government of Rajasthan

Shri A M Lal, Director Evaluation Organisation, Government of Rajasthan

Shri A P Diwan, Collector, Jaipur District

Shri P K Chaudhuri, M L A , Rajasthan Legislative Assembly

Shri D D Narula, Department of Economics and Public Administration

Dr. Iqbal Narain, Deputy Director, Panchayati Raj Research Project

Dr V M Sinha, Assistant Director, Panchayati Raj Research Project

We are deeply indebted to the members of the Advisory Committee who took personal interest in the work of the 'project' and guided and helped its operations

It was thought feasible to confine the field study just to one district in Rajasthan and to make an intensive study of panchayati raj in all its functional dimensions and through its entire institutional structure so that panchayati raj could be viewed in its totality and in all its aspects It was, therefore decided to take up one zila parishad, three panchayat samitis and four panchayats in each panchayat samiti for our study

Within the confines of this limited sample, our coverage has been rather exhaustive We have tried to examine panchayati

raj from the point of view of emerging institutional leadership, behaviour pattern and the interest of its members; its functioning in the specific context of 'planning from below' and implementation of development programmes; the baffling problems particularly of 'official-non-official' relationships that have been thrown up in its wake; the financial and administrative challenges facing it; and finally, its overall impact. There was no idea of studying gram sabha and nyaya panchayats in the original outline. But it was later felt that the study would be incomplete unless these important institutions were also covered.

We followed purposive criteria in the selection of our sample, wherever it was possible for us to exercise discretion. Of course, as far as the zila parishad was concerned, it was self-selected. However, for selecting panchayat samitis, we worked on the following four-fold criteria :

(i) distance from the city;
(ii) level of development in terms of the stages of the Community Development Programme;
(iii) *jagir* or *khalsa* background; and
(iv) distinctly outstanding or poor performance record.*

The selection of panchayats to be studied intensively was made a little later after the research officers were put in the field and had acquired some first hand knowledge about the panchayat samitis in their charge. They were asked to prepare a list of eight to six panchayats of their choice and also to indicate the reasons for their preference. They did so. The more important considerations in the criteria that they had evolved in the selection of panchayats were affiliation of the panchayat to the pradhan's group or the opposition group and such indices as performance record, the pattern of 'official-non-official' relationship and the like.

Out of the list submitted on this basis, *four* panchayats were selected in each panchayat samiti in consultation with the State level officials in a meeting of our Advisory Committee. We invariably chose the panchayat of the pradhan's village and a panchayat belonging to the opposition group. The nyaya panchayat located at the headquarters of the panchayat samiti was taken up for study. The research officers covered as many gram sabhas which were held

* Here we had to rely on the information given to us by the high level State officials.

during their period of field study as they possibly could.

We have absolutely no intention of generalising on the basis of our study, partly because of the limited nature of our sample and partly because of the large amount of variables that we witnessed in the operational pattern of panchayati raj institutions even in relation to our own limited sample, let alone the wide span of regional variations pertaining to entire Rajasthan. It will, however, not be out of place to mention that there is a ring of general credence about our findings, as it has been borne out by the field visits of the Honorary Director all over India as a member of the Panchayati Raj Finance Team and of the Deputy Director all over Rajasthan as a member of the Sadiq Ali *Committee on Panchayati* Raj. And yet there are important variables which should not be ignored by social scientists. These variables, in fact, bear out the *rationale* of panchayati raj itself which, as an instrument of decentralised democracy at local rural levels, is a plea for recognising local variations and meeting their demands and challenges on the spot.

The approach adopted in this study has been one of *qualitative appraisal.* It was thought that the enquiry would not fulfil its purpose if it remained merely a statistical survey, enumerating physical achievements or shortfalls. What has been aimed at is an intensive probe into the politico-administrative, socio-economic and other psychological facets of human activity—motives of power, monetary gain and other temptations and ambitions—underlying the working of panchayati raj and the shaping of its operational image. Such an approach alone could result in a qualitative appraisal of a type which, besides evaluating the successes and failures of panchayati raj, may help in the identification of the human and material factors responsible for the applied utility or otherwise of panchayati raj as an instrument of decentralised democracy and development.

The *quantitative* method has also been fruitfully used to feed *qualitative* analysis and to import empirical validity to it. Methodologically speaking, the report has been an amalgam of several methods : it has been built around qualitative analysis, quantitative information and even impressionistic observations which in the present stage of development of social sciences cannot as yet be processed through reliable tools and acceptable norms of judgment, though we have tried to verify them with the help of com-

parative method and cross-referencing. The approach of *qualitative appraisal* is expected to yield the advantage of a deeper and closer probe into the interplay of human, sociological and politico-economic factors in the operations of an institutional apparatus like panchayati raj which has a social base in the tradition bound villages and which has to work through the rural folk who have been denied access to the avenues of power through the ages and who have, therefore, developed a psychology of *Mai-Bap* government, besides the phenomenon of mental resistance to the demands of modernisation. It is this wider perspective which perhaps justifies the approach that we have adopted.

The approach of *qualitative appraisal* was applied with the help of an integrated social sciences angle. This has perhaps made it all the more broad-based and fruitful. Panchayati raj is essentially multi-dimensional in its bearings in as far as it touches rural society, rural economy and rural power structure. The sociologist, the economist and the political scientist all feel equally drawn to its study. It was, therefore, thought necessary to adopt a multi-focused but integrated social sciences approach while attempting qualitative appraisal of panchayati raj institutions.

It may also be added that we are inclined to look upon the present enquiry as an exercise in normative field research, the purpose of enquiry being not merely fact finding. It was this and yet something more than this. (The objective of the study was not merely to identify achievements, shortcomings and problem areas but also to suggest ways and means of improving the tone and working of panchayati raj institutions. We have, therefore, indulged in what may be called constructive criticism which admits identification of problems as also suggestions to solve them in the light of our field experience. What distinguishes our enquiry is, therefore, the fact that it does not merely give findings of field research but also embodies results of constructive thinking which have crystallised in the form of recommendations.)

Another special feature of our study has been that it has been conducted by a well qualified staff not below the rank of a research officer. We recognised from the very beginning that, unless we are in a position to send to the villages some well qualified, intellectually alive and sensitive research officers, the enquiry would not be able to meet the exacting demands of *qualitative appraisal* and critical but constructive analysis. We could, there-

fore, prevail upon the National Institute of Community Development & Research to allow us to employ research officers in the grade of a university lecturer and the Deputy Director in the grade of a university Reader, so that persons possessing high academic qualifications and aptitude and calibre for field research may feel drawn to our study.

This experiment has been a great success in so far as the research officers could establish a remarkable *rapport* with the villagers in a rather short time and could elicit their cooperation. They could also inspire confidence both among the non-officials and the officials and secure their support. What is, however, most important is that they could bring to bear a sensitive imagination and a sympathetic, realistic and critical insight into the study of panchayati raj institutions, besides applying their minds to finding out the ways and means of solving the various problems that they came across in the field.

It may not be out of place here to introduce our research staff to the readers. Dr. Iqbal Narain, Deputy Director of Panchayati Raj Research Project, is Reader in the Department of Political Science. I am thankful to Shri B. Mehta, Chief Secretary to the Government of Rajasthan, and a member of our Advisory Committee, for having originally agreed to release Dr. Iqbal Narain on deputation from the Government to take up the 'project' assignment. Dr. Iqbal Narain is a distinguished scholar of political science with special interest in the field of panchayati raj. Apart from his deep scholarship, he combines in himself the rare qualities of hard and sustained work, meticulous care for details, and a flair for team work.

Dr. V.M. Sinha, the Assistant Director, is a lecturer in Public Administration. Shri A.C. Bhandari, one of our research officers, had two years of teaching experience of degree and post-graduate classes to his credit, besides being a first class first in M.A. (Political Science). Shri Gopal Bharadwaj, another research officer of ours, has been a first class first in Social Anthropology. He had been a U.G.C. research fellow and a part-time tutor at Saugur University. Shri Ram Prakash, our third research officer, had taken his M.A. degree in Economics and had worked as a research officer in the National Council of Applied Economic Reserch for about a year. When Shri Bhandari left us to take up a teaching assignment, Shri D.C. Jha was appointed in his place. 'He had done his post-graduation

in Public Administration. Finally, in February 1963 when Shri Ram Prakash had to be relieved to join the Indian Army, in the wake of national emergency, Shri Ram Acharya who had his M.A. degree in Political Science and who had been working as a research assistant to the Deputy Director in the 'project' was promoted as research officer. Shri P.C. Mathur was specially invited to assist us in the 'project'. He has been a first class first in M.A. (Public Administration). He is conducting research on *The Theory of Democratic Decentralisation in the Specific Context of India's Developing Economy and its Practice in Rajasthan.* It may be emphasised here that these research officers, drawn from a number of interconnected disciplines like economics, social anthropology, public administration and political science could bring to bear upon the study of panchayati raj institutions the expertise of their respective disciplines, besides developing a multi-focused but integrated social sciences approach which, as stated earlier, is also one of the distinguishing features of this study.

The duration of our enquiry has also been an asset. We could devote about twenty months to intensive field work during which each research officer could stay in the panchayat samiti in his charge and could also travel extensively for purposes of his study. The time span of field work made it difficult for the non-officials and the officials associated with panchayati raj institutions as also for the average villager to hold out an artificial self which might beguile a casual observer into misleading observations and conclusions. This also helped the research officers to filter out the initial and hasty first impressions. This, in many cases, also enabled them to probe deeper into institutional operations, beyond what they appeared on the surface, in the light of informal and behind-the-scene manipulations and activities which at times provided a close insight into the intricate web of human behaviour.

With a view to take the best advantage of the duration of enquiry and to keep the research officers always on the alert, they were asked to submit monthly reports on the progress of their work together with their observations on the working of panchayati raj. These reports, in fact, became monthly commentaries on panchayati raj affairs in their respective areas of operation and enabled the staff at the headquarters to develop an insight into the flow of events in each panchayat samiti which they also visited from time to time. The Deputy Director used to send his comments on the monthly reports, suggesting further points of enquiry

and removing difficulties that were posed by the research officers from time to time The reports of the research officers together with the comments of the Deputy Director were circulated among all research officers in the field so that they could exchange notes and benefit from each other's experience In methodological terms this experiment proved to be of great advantage

Books, reports and other literature from our nucleus library at the headquarters were also circulated among research officers in the field with a view to keep them abreast of the latest research techniques and developments in the fields of community development and panchayati raj In case there was any important document which we thought should be made available to the research officers for ready reference, several copies of it were purchased so that each of them could keep a copy to himself Efforts were also made to prepare condensed versions of articles in journals and standard weeklies and newspapers on panchayati raj and these were circulated among the research officers Thus the research officers were not merely kept uptodate but were also fed intellectually to correct their hypotheses, to develop newer ones and to test those of others through their field investigations

Monthly meetings between the staff working at the headquarters and the research officers in the field were also organised They provided useful opportunities for exchange of ideas to their mutual advantage The occasion was also used by the Honorary Director and the Deputy Director for ironing out difficulties of the research officers who, in turn, could exchange notes with their counterparts working in other panchayat samitis

Even at the risk of digression, it may be worthwhile to point out that it has been fairly useful to compare the results of informal and formal interviews which helped us in reducing the margin of error It also helped us in finding out where those who were formally interviewed had tried to give rationalised replies, instead of actual information As a result of informal contacts, the research officers also obtained a good deal of information of personal, secret and confidential nature The information so obtained has been used with care and caution

The research officers worked in the field with the help of a number of schedules which were prepared at the headquarters on the basis of a pilot survey conducted by them in consultation with officials and non-officials associated with the working of pan-

chayati raj institutions.

A number of interim reports on some of the major aspects of enquiry were also prepared with the object of facilitating the task of drafting and presentation of the report. The interim reports so prepared dealt with management of primary schools; working of gram sabhas, nyaya panchayats and zila parishad; emerging rural leadership and their experience with the principles of cooperation.

The research officers continued their field work till February 1963 when they were instructed to devote their attention mainly to the preparation of draft area reports covering all aspects of the working of panchayati raj institutions in their respective areas of enquiry. These draft reports were finalised and edited by the Deputy Director after prolonged discussions with the research officers. The reports were then cyclostyled and sent to the Institute.

With the finalisation of area reports, field operations were more or less over. The Deputy Director then took up the preparation of the final consolidated report with the help of Shri V.M. Sinha, Assistant Director, Shri P.C. Mathur, and other members of the 'project' team. After the first draft of the consolidated report was ready, it was discussed in detail with the Honorary Director and also with Dr. S.C. Dube, Principal and Director of Research, National Institute of Community Development. The report owes much to these discussions. We also benefited in the preparation of our report by the proceedings of a seminar on *Public Administration and Panchayati Raj* which was organised by the National Institute of Community Development and the discussions at the *Udaipur Seminar on Panchayati Raj* which was sponsored by the All India Panchayat Parishad. The Honorary Director participated in both these seminars.

We have deliberately removed the identities of institutions, places and persons and introduced symbols to indicate the names of panchayat samitis and panchayats. We would, however, like to disclose the identity of the district where the study was conducted so that its findings could be appreciated. Our study relates to the district of Jaipur. Though the physical factor of proximity of the area studied to Jaipur city—the largest urban centre in Rajasthan and its capital—could not be altogether neutralised, efforts were made to import a truly representative character by selecting three panchayat samitis on the basis of the four-fold

criteria indicated earlier.

It is my pleasant duty to record my grateful thanks to a number of people without whose sustained interest and enthusiastic help and cooperation the present empirical study would not have been possible. I am grateful to Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta, Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajasthan, for his keen interest in and encouraging concern for the 'project'. I am equally thankful to Dr. S.C. Dube, Principal and Director of Research, National Institute of Community Development, for the guidance that he gave from time to time at different stages in the life story of the 'project.' He came down to Jaipur four times in a period of two years and had useful discussions with the Deputy Director. These discussions have gone a long way in improving the quality of field research and the tone of this report. What has distinguished the handling of the 'project' by Dr. Dube as Director of Research at the National Institute of Community Development is his concern for respecting the academic freedom of the University.

I am equally thankful to a number of senior government officials, especially to Shri B. Mehta, Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, Shri Ram Singh, Joint Development Commissioner, Shri A.M. Lal, Director, Evaluation Organisation, Shri K.L. Baraya and Shri A.P. Diwan, both of whom had been District Development Officers, and Shri M.L. Surekha who had been a Deputy District Development Officer. These state and district level officers took personal interest in the 'project' and gave us their enthusiastic and whole-hearted support without which our research officers would perhaps not have got the same amount of cooperation at the block level, particularly from the officials, which it had been their privilege to receive in abundance.

I shall be failing in my duty if I were not to acknowledge my gratitude to the officials and non-officials at the block level. They accepted the research officers as impartial observers and helped them both formally and informally but always enthusiastically in their field investigations. Among the non-officials, I am particularly thankful to Shri Narain Chaturvedi, Pramukh, Jaipur Zila Parishad, the pradhans of the panchayat samitis studied, a number of sarpanchas, panchas and nyaya panchas who always welcomed our queries and actively helped our officers in establishing their bonafides in the villages. They were all through extremely cooperative and helpful. They would take care to keep the research officers posted

with uptodate information about panchayati raj affairs in their area. We are equally grateful to the three vikas adhikaris and a number of extension officers and village level workers who took sincere pains to facilitate the work of our research officers and also offered advice based on their field experience with regard to various problems facing the panchayati raj institutions. In fact, they would quite often acquaint the research officers with the inner story of various episodes relating to panchayati raj in their area and this would illuminate the various hypotheses with which our officers had been grappling in the field. They would also offer suggestions for solving the various problems besetting them. Quite a few of their suggestions have been incorporated in this report.

I gratefully acknowledge the zest, earnestness of purpose, industry, team spirit and, above all, honesty of pursuit that the 'project team' displayed all through the course of its investigation. It was ably and enthusiastically led by Dr. Iqbal Narain, Deputy Director, who worked hard to ensure that the enquiry turns out to be a worthwhile and creditworthy academic venture. He was ably assisted by Dr. V.M. Sinha, Assistant Director, and Shri Ram Acharya, Research Assistant to the Deputy Director. I am particularly thankful to Shri P.C. Mathur who served the 'project' as a special invitee in an honorary capacity from its very inception. He helped us in the preparation of schedules, in the drafting of interim reports, in editing the area reports and, above all, in the preparation of the final report. I am equally appreciative of the work of our research officers in the field—Gopal Bharadwaj, Ram Prakash, and D.C. Jha—who in fact were the backbone of our enquiry. They never took their field assignments in a mercenary spirit but went to the field with the earnestness and devotion of true enquirers who would be satisfied with nothing but truth through their investigations. They have successfully lived up to the ideal of honest and productive field research in which they have not merely identified problems but have also suggested solutions in the light of their field experience. They had to lead rather a hard life in the villages to which they had not been used, yet nothing would deter them in their field investigations. We were fortunate in having a band of devoted workers on the ministerial side in T. V. Menon, T. G. Menon, M.K.P. Nair, O.P. Verma, Chetan Dass, Damodar Prasad and Kishan Lal Dhingra who had to work in and out of season at great personal inconvenience to prepare the typed script and the

final cyclostyled version of the report. What has been most remarkable about them is that they enjoyed the job in hand and never took it in the routine casual way which is often the attitude of the ministerial staff working in various offices.

In sum, the Panchayati Raj Research Project has been a cooperative venture in the true sense of the term in which officials and non-officials at the state, district and block levels and the 'project team', both on the research and the ministerial side, have combined in an effort to give their best. Yet I would urge upon the readers not to judge our report too critically because we are conscious of the fact that it has all the limitations of a pioneering effort. In spite of all the imperfections of this study (of which none is more conscious than the 'project team' itself), it might be modestly claimed that this perhaps is the first exhaustive study of the working of panchayati raj in all its aspects by a University Department. Our State incidentally was the first to introduce panchayati raj. If the study inspires an outlook of independent but constructive criticism among the readers, the team will feel rewarded in its labours.

Jaipur
July 1966

M.V. Mathur
Honorary Director

I

The Statutory Pattern

THE Balwantray Mehta Study Team sought to renovate rural India by '*a dispersal of machinery and devolution of authority*' through panchayati raj. They proposed the establishment of a three-tier institutional structure with specific decision making powers in matters relating to management of local affairs. The Study Team emphasised two aspects of the institutional structure of panchayati raj—its autonomous nature and elective character. The institutional structure envisaged by the Study Team was patterned on these two specifications.

Rajasthan was the first to take to democratic decentralisation or panchayati raj, as it has come to be termed, when it was inaugurated on 2nd October, 1959, by Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. It was established under a special Act of the legislature (Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959) according to which the broad objectives of the scheme were:

> To enable the people to participate fully and actively in all development programmes. The government hopes that this would develop the initiative of the local people and that sound leadership which is highly indispensable to the successful working of democratic institutions will arise and be developed at all the levels in the district.

The Act provided for the establishment of panchayat samitis at the block level and zila parishads at the district level, while the statutory pattern of the third or the lowest tier, panchayats, continued to be governed by the provisions of the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953. The 1959 Act, however, introduced a number of

amendments[1] in the 1953 Act which was itself a 'consolidating' Act making uniform provisions for all panchayats in the state and repealing the Panchayat Act enacted by the princely states before they were merged with Rajasthan.

The three-tier structure of panchayati raj institutions thus came to be created not under a single comprehensive Act but under two separate Acts which were suitably harmonized with each other. In actual practice, the Rajasthan model of panchayati raj closely conformed to the model suggested by the Balwantray Mehta Study Team, that is, panchayat samiti at the block level as the key functional institution, zila parishad at the district level in an advisory role and panchayat at the village level as the executive agent of panchayat samiti. The degree of autonomy, the extent of financial and administrative devolution, the sphere of operation and the size of personnel contingent of these three statutory institutions were determined accordingly.[2]

Panchayat

The panchayat, as provided by the 1953 and 1959 Acts, is a corporate statutory body composed of 5 to 15 members. Its individual member is designated as panch, while its chairman is called sarpanch. It is elected by universal adult franchise for a period of 3 years and operates in a village or group of villages. The panchayat is thus an elective body whose panchas and sarpanch are directly elected and which is entrusted with a specific set of functions for operating in a limited territory. Besides the elected members, every panchayat can co-opt the following members :

two women,
two members of scheduled castes, and
one member of scheduled tribes.[3]

1. 'This Bill', it was explained in the statement of objects of the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Bill, 'proposes to undertake comprehensive legislation for the purpose of establishing Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads in the State. It seeks to introduce amendments in the Rajasthan Panchayat Act wherever necessary so that the Panchayats may fit in the three-tier scheme of decentralisation contemplated by the Bill.'

2. In November 1962, the Government of Rajasthan appointed a Study Team under the Chairmanship of Sadiq Ali M.P. to examine the working of panchayati raj institutions and suggest necessary modifications in the panchayati raj legislation. The Study Team submitted its report in 1964 and in the light of its recommendations several changes of basic importance were introduced in the statutory structure of panchayati raj in Rajasthan. Some of these changes have been indicated in footnotes to this chapter.

3. The Sadiq Ali Study Team recommended that the president of service cooperative society should be made an associate member of panchayat and, in case of more than one such societies in a panchayat circle, the presidents should elect one person from amongst themselves to serve on the panchayat.

At the time of introduction of the 1959 Act, there were as many as 3058 panchayats but a reorganisation was effected in the size of panchayats with the result that their number increased to 7394, covering 34441 villages and a total rural population of nearly 131 lakhs, the population and number of villages per panchayat being 1772 and 4 respectively

The functional schedule of panchayats also underwent a marked change In the wake of the introduction of panchayati raj the focus of activity shifted to socio-economic development The list of functions entrusted to panchayats under panchayati raj clearly reflects this orientation According to the third schedule attached to the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953, the distinction between 'obligatory' and 'discretionary' functions was abolished and the panchayats entrusted with the duty of making 'reasonable provisions' for (i) sanitation and health, (ii) public works, (iii) education and culture, (iv) self-defence and panchayat circle defence, (v) administration, (vi) welfare of the people, (vii) agriculture and preservation of forests, (viii) breeding and protecting cattle, (ix) village industries and (x) miscellaneous The 1959 Act also authorizes the panchayats to act as executive agents of the panchayat samiti with reference to any scheme launched by it within the panchayat area

The panchayats are authorised to levy a number of taxes, the major ones being building tax, entertainment tax, vehicle tax, pilgrimage tax and water supply tax They can also charge fees or insist on licences for temporary erections In addition, they are empowered by a separate Act to levy a special tax on community service to be realised in cash or labour from every able-bodied resident for certain public works The panchayat budget is required to be submitted to the panchayat samiti for approval The latter is authorized to make any alterations or modifications which are binding on the panchayat The government is also authorized to issue directions in this regard to panchayat samitis from time to time

Finally, as far as personnel is concerned the 1953 as well as the 1959 Acts do not make any provision for panchayat staff, except authorizing the sarpanch to appoint a part-time or whole time secretary whose salary and scale of pay are to be determined by the government The secretary serves as the administrative officer and record-keeper of the panchayat but most panchayats

do not have enough financial resources to employ a well paid, whole time and qualified secretary with the result that many panchayats have to go without any clerical assistance.

Panchayat Samiti

The panchayat samiti forms the middle rung of the three-tier structure of panchayati raj. In Rajasthan, panchayat samitis have been formed at the block level; their total number being 232. The panchayat samiti is also an elective body but its members are elected indirectly. The sarpanchas of all panchayats within the jurisdiction of a panchayat samiti are its *ex officio* members. Provision has also been made for the cooption of the following categories of members:[4]

(i) presidents of gram sabhas of villages which have been placed under gramdan according to the Rajasthan Gramdan Act, 1966;

(ii) two women, if no woman is a member of panchayat samiti, and only one, if a woman is already its member;

(iii) two persons belonging to scheduled castes if no such person is a member of panchayat samiti;

(iv) two persons from each scheduled tribe whose population is more than 5 per cent of the population of the block;

(v) one person from amongst the members of managing committees of cooperative societies registered and functioning in the block; and

(vi) two persons whose experience in administration, public life or rural development would be of benefit to the panchayat samiti.

Besides these categories of *ex officio* (called the 'parent' members in this study) and coopted members, the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, provides for making every member of the Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.) an 'associate' member of panchayat samitis falling in the Vidhan Sabha constituency

4. The Sadiq Ali Study Team strongly disapproved of the misuse of the provision of cooption and recommended that cooption of persons having experience in public life, administration or rural development should be abolished. It, however, recommended associate membership for representatives of cooperative institutions like service cooperatives, marketing societies and other cooperative societies. The Study Team also suggested cooption of members before the election of pradhan so as to discourage them from participating in such elections. Otherwise, they were to have full voting rights including right to hold office.

from which he is elected. The associate members are authorized to attend panchayat samiti meetings and participate in its deliberations but, unlike the parent and coopted members, they are not entitled to vote or to hold any elective office in the panchayat samiti.

The term of a panchayat samiti is 3 years. Its presiding officer, the pradhan, is elected from amongst its members. Both the parent and the coopted members are thus entitled to vote in the election of pradhan.[5]

The panchayat samiti is entrusted with a number of functions: agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, community development, health and rural sanitation, primary education, social education, social welfare, rural housing, rural and cottage industries and miscellaneous matters, such as collection of statistics, publicity and emergency relief, etc. In each of these spheres a number of specific schemes and projects, which were previously administered directly by the concerned government departments, have been transferred to panchayat samitis. The corresponding financial and personnel resources have also been placed at their disposal. Besides the 'transferred' schemes, panchayat samitis can initiate their own schemes in these spheres and administer other schemes especially entrusted to them in these and other spheres. The entire community development programme has thus been placed under the jurisdiction of panchayat samitis.

The financial resources of panchayat samitis flow from three sources: the C.D. 'schematic block budget', grants and grants-in-aid for transferred schemes, and their own resources including income from taxes. The panchayat samitis are authorized to levy a number of taxes, namely :

(i) 5 per cent tax on the rent of agricultural land;
(ii) tax on trades, callings and professions at rates specified by the government;
(iii) surcharge on stamp duty on transfers of immovable property;
(iv) primary education cess; and
(v) tax on panchayat samiti fares.

5. The Sadiq Ali Study Team radically altered the mode of election of the pradhan by recommending the constitution of a broad-based electoral college composed of all panchayats and all members of panchayat samiti.

They are also authorized to raise loans with the prior approval of the government and receive a share of land revenue at the rate of 25 per cent per head of the population residing in their respective jurisdiction. The budget of the panchayat samiti is sent to the zila parishad. But suggestions or directions of the latter are not binding on it.

The day-to-day execution of schemes of the panchayat samiti is carried out by a large team of officers headed by the vikas adhikari (formerly designated as Block Development Officer) and a team of extension officers who are subject matter specialists in various fields, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, rural industries, etc. The vikas adhikari in Rajasthan is generally an officer drawn from the cadre of Rajasthan Administrative Service (R.A.S.). He is responsible for execution of the plans and programmes of panchayat samiti and for maintaining control and supervision over all officers and servants of the panchayat samiti. The vikas adhikari works under the general control of the District Collector. The pradhans are, however, empowered to send confidential reports on the working of the vikas adhikari to the Collector and to the State Government.

The extension officers are drawn from the cadres of their respective departments and placed on deputation in the service of panchayat samitis. The latter can exercise only 'administrative control' over them, while the departments continue to exercise 'technical control'. Besides these deputed officers, whose main task is to administer the 'transferred' and other panchayat samiti schemes, a special Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Service has been constituted. It consists of the following functionaries:

Village level worker
Gram sevika
Primary school teacher
Fieldman
Stockman
Stock assistant
Veterinary compounder
Poultry demonstrator
Sheep and wool supervisor
Dresser
Vaccinator
Upper and lower division clerks

Driver
Projector operator
Mates (industries)

Most of the foregoing functionaries operate under panchayat samitis and their recruitment and training is regulated by the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Service Selection Commission which works through district establishment committees. The service conditions of these employees are governed by the rules framed for this purpose by the government. For all practical purposes, however, they work under the full administrative control of panchayat samitis.

The panchayat samitis transact their business in general meetings which are held at the headquarters at regular intervals. To enable the members to meet more frequently and give more time for deliberations on policy issues, every panchayat samiti is required to constitute at least three standing committees dealing with the following subjects :

(i) production programmes;
(ii) social services ; and
(iii) finance, taxation and administration.

Zila Parishad

The zila parishad constituted at the district level or at the apex of the panchayat raj structure is essentially an advisory body whose main task is to maintain general supervision over panchayats and panchayat samitis. Each zila parishad consists of the following *ex officio* members :

(i) pradhans of all panchayat samitis in the district ;
(ii) memb[illegible] of Lok Sabha whose constituency falls in the district
(iii) memb[illegible]
(iv) memb[illegible] distri[illegible]
(v) presi[illegible] servi[illegible]

Besides t[illegible] ed to be coo[illegible]

(i) two [illegible]

(ii) one person belonging to scheduled castes if no such person is otherwise a member ;

(iii) one person belonging to scheduled tribes whose population exceeds 5 per cent of the total district population, provided no such person is already a member ; and

(iv) two persons with experience in administration, public life and rural development.[6]

All *ex officio* and coopted members of zila parishad, including the members of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Sabha, enjoy full membership rights, that is, they can vote, hold elective offices and participate in the deliberations of zila parishad.[7] The Collector or the District Development Officer, as he is now designated, is a non-voting member of the zila parishad. Its presiding officer is called the pramukh.[8]

The administrative staff of the zila parishad consists of a secretary, who is generally a senior officer of the Rajasthan Administrative Service (R.A.S.), and a small clerical establishment comprising lower and upper division clerks.

The zila parishad mainly acts as a coordinating and advisory body, linking the activities of various panchayats and panchayat samitis in the district and maintaining close liaison with the State Government. It also maintains general supervision over the plans and programmes and can take steps to coordinate the schemes of panchayat samitis under its jurisdiction.[9] The zila parishad is also empowered to scrutinize the budget of panchayat samitis but its advice in this regard is not binding.

The financial resources of zila parishad consist mainly of grants and grants-in-aid from the government for meeting its establishment charges, salaries and allowances of its employees and the honorarium of the pramukh including such other facilities which are provided to him. The zila parishads are empowered to receive contributions or donations from their constituent panchayat samitis but they are not authorized to levy taxes or raise loans.

6. The Sadiq Ali Study Team recommended the removal of this clause.
7. The Sadiq Ali Study Team recommended that M.Ps and M..L.As should have voting rights but not the right to hold any office in the panchayati raj institutions.
8. The pramukh receives an honorarium of Rs. 250 per month.
9. The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, authorizes the formation of standing committees of zila parishad but does not specify their number or functions.

Gram Sabha

Besides panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad, there are a number of other institutions (some of which are non-statutory) which are included in the category of panchayati raj institutions The most important among these are the gram sabha and nyaya panchayat, both being organically linked with the structure of panchayati raj

The gram sabha[10] is the technical name given to the 'general meeting of adult residents which, according to the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953 (as amended in 1959), has to be called by every panchayat twice a year, generally during the months of May-July and October-December The gram sabha is essentially viewed as an open forum for general review and scrutiny of the work done by the panchayat Its views or decisions are, however, not binding on the panchayat The sarpanch is vested with the responsibility of calling gram sabha meetings at the appointed time and placing before it the panchayat budget for review and discussion The gram sabha is, however, not empowered to approve or disapprove the budget but the views expressed in the meeting are required to be noted and communicated to the government

Nyaya Panchayat

Till 1959 there was no separation of the executive and judicial functions of panchayats They were functioning both as administrative agencies and as village courts As a result of comprehensive amendments of the 1953 Act the judicial functions were vested in a separate institution, called the nyay panchayat[11] About 1370 nyaya panchayats were thus formed They were statutorily empowered to entertain and dispose off criminal cases of simple nature and civil suits up to Rs 250 In exercise of its criminal jurisdiction, a nyaya panchayat can impose fines up to Rs 50

The members of the nyaya panchayat are elected by its constituent panchayats Each panchayat is entitled to elect one person to serve on the nyaya panchayat The chairman of the nyaya panchayat is elected by the members from amongst themselves No member of any panchayati raj institution (including M P s and M L A s) can become a member of a nyaya panchayat until he resigns from such office

10 The specific term gram sabha is not used in the Act but it is generally used in practice

11 The jurisdiction of nyaya panchayat extends to include 5 to 7 panchayats

Other Institutions

Besides the institutions so far listed or described, there are a number of agencies or bodies which are in some way linked with the panchayati raj institutions. The initial phase of Community Development Movement gave birth to the concept of 'associate' institutions supplementing the work of village panchayats by undertaking works relating to women, children, youth and other sections of society having special problems of their own. These functional organisations were established as voluntary 'special interest' organisations under the inspiration and guidance of the block administration. The concerned extension staff—social education extension officer, lady social education extension officer, gramsevaks and gramkakis—were expected to sponsor their formation, supervise their working and subsidize their finances out of the funds earmarked for such purposes in the schematic budget. With the formation of statutory panchayats all over the State these responsibilities have been devolved and entrusted to panchayati raj institutions, especially the panchayat and panchayat samiti.

The cooperatives are also expected to work in close collaboration with the panchayats. The linkage between the panchayat and the cooperative is non-statutory at the panchayat level. At other levels—panchayat samiti and zila parishad—provision has however been made for the cooption of representatives of cooperative institutions as members. In the absence of similar provision in the case of panchayats it, has not been possible to forge any structural link between the panchayat and the cooperative. Even then the cooperatives could be designated as coordinate institutions of panchayati raj, particularly in view of the fact that they are increasingly coming in contact with each other in the performance of their role and responsibilities.

The foregoing description of the institutional matrix of panchayati raj provides the perspective against which its actual operation—the subject matter of this report—can be best studied, critically examined and meaningfully interpreted.

II

The Emerging Institutional Leadership

THE structural strength of the nuclei institutions of panchayati raj—panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad—lies in their ability to throw up the *right* type of leadership. Leadership for this purpose can be viewed as a function of the 'institutional role' allotted to the panchayat institutions and their members. To evaluate this, it is essential to apply a twofold test of leadership—a qualitative test and an empirical test. The first calls for an assessment of the capacity of the leaders of panchayati raj to fulfil the role assigned to them as members of panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad and, the second, an assessment of how these leaders have actually discharged their role in practice.

The discussion which follows seeks to bring out this aspect of panchayati raj through a 'structural-functional' analysis of its leadership, the latter being classified into four broad types:[12]

12. Included in these categories are :
Parent members : At the panchayat level—panchas and sarpanch who are directly elected to the panchayat; at the panchayat samiti level—all sarpanchas of panchayats who are *ex-officio* members of panchayat samiti; and at the zila parishad level—all pradhans of panchayat samitis who are *ex-officio* members of zila parishad.
Coopted members : All those who are coopted as members in the various panchayati raj institutions and enjoying all participatory voting and office holding rights.
Associate members : The members of Parliament and State legislatures enjoying associate membership (without voting or office holding rights) of panchayat [illegible] institutions to [illegible]
mer [illegible]
he [illegible]
an [illegible]
par [illegible]

parent members, coopted members, associate members and additional members. The classification of membership so made is based according to the method by which it is constituted at different levels of panchayati raj, including the rights and privileges which are statutorily guaranteed to it.

Parent Membership

The panchas and sarpanchas are the only directly elected functionaries in panchayati raj. Yet, as it will be borne out from subsequent discussions, the panchas are the least articulate members in the panchayati raj set up. This is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Basically, it is due to the agelong authoritarian tradition which has sapped the rural folk of all its initiative. It should not be surprising, therefore, if the villagers take time to discover their potentiality and to collect enough courage to stand up on their own feet. The process of activising the panchas has necessarily to be taken as a slow process as it is intimately linked with the overall phenomenon of the regeneration of Village India. There are also a number of institutional factors which make the panchas proverbially inactive. These can be summarised as below:

1. After the delimitation of panchayats,[13] most panchayats have become economically inviable units. This in turn has limited their functional capacity. An institution which is weak in resources and limited in its functional scope can hardly inspire its members to be be up and doing.

2. Though the panchayats are proclaimed to be units of basic importance in the panchayati raj structure,[14] the panchayat samiti has been entrusted with so much of authority, resources and prestige that it has completely eclipsed the institutional role of panchayats. The panchayats, therefore, do not draw the best people.

3. As a corollary to the foregoing factor, the office of the

13. Prior to the panchayat elections of 1960, the panchayats were delimited on the basis of their population. The tehsil panchayats were now abolished and the number of panchayat samitis increased. The impact of this reorganisation on the three panchayat samitis studied can be seen from the fact that the number of panchayats under the jurisdiction of each panchayat samiti, before and after delimitation, increased from 25 to 41 in the case of the first samiti; from 17 to 21 in the case of the second samiti; and from 23 to 33 in the case of the third samiti.

14. A high ranking officer of the State Govhrnment honestly believes that a serious rethinking is required on the issue whether the panchayats can still be treated in the larger interest of planning as basic units in view of their small size and limited resources.

sarpanch has amassed around it so much of weight that the panchas have *automatically* paled into insignificance. This naturally affects their initiative, particularly because the sarpanchas are more interested in concentrating all powers in their hands rather than sharing them with their fellow-panchas. Apart from this tendency, the office of the Sarpancha, structurallyspeaking, is superior to the office of the panchas. The sarpanch is directly elected. He is also the *ex-officio* member of the panchayat samiti. The panchayat samiti reaches the panchayats through the sarpanch who alone is connected with the entire official hierarchy. Altogether, the panchas thus go around as non-descript persons.

As far as the election of panchas is concerned, caste is an important factor, though perhaps not an exclus've factor. This is borne out by the following table showing the caste composition of leadership in the panchayats affiliated to one of the panchayat samitis studied by us.

Table I

Caste	*Population (per cent)*	*Seats of panchas held (per cent)*
Brahmin	5	13.6
Rajput	10	9.1
Mahajan	5	6.6
Jat	20	20.4
Gujar	20	11.1
Meena	5	5.8
Scheduled Castes	20	13.6
Others	15	19.8
Total	100	100.0

It is heartening to note, however, that in the case of sarpanchas there are wide discrepencies between the strength of a particular caste and the number of seats of sarpanchship held by it. This is shown in the following table.

Table II*

Caste	*Population (per cent)*	*Proportion of seats held (per cent)*
Brahmin	5	24.4
Rajput	10	29.1
Mahajan	5	12.2
Jat	20	12.2
Gujar	20	2.4
Meena	5	2.4
Scheduled Castes	20	—
Others	15	7.3
Total	100	100.0

* Data relates to one of the panchayat samitis studied.

The foregoing table bears out the fact that the percentage of caste population and the percentage of caste representation differs widely from each other and that the numerical strength of a caste does not always reflect itself at the level of sarpanchship. The dominating trend in this connection seems to be that the castes which traditionally rank higher in the prevailing social scale usually manage to secure a greater representation than those ranking lower in the social hierarchy. This is best revealed by the data presented in table III.

The table shows that the trend is one of higher castes securing a larger number offices at the level of sarpanchship than at the level of the panchaship. Conversely, the trend implies that the representation of lower castes at the level of sarpanchas is far less than that at the level of panchas.[15]

15. This analysis in terms of caste population and panchayati raj offices has not only a statistical validity but is also rooted in political realities. In rural politics, the vital micro-unit is the head of the household and the key macro-unit is the aggregate number of households belonging to a particular caste. As the latter mostly live in physical proximity, their political identity is subsumed in their caste label. For purposes of discussions and political decisions all households belonging to a particular caste are, therefore, lumped together and counted as one entity. With the introduction of universal adult sufferage the people have become conscious of their individual voting rights and, therefore, find it useful to count the members of all households as one entity for assessing and asserting their political strength. The foregoing analysis is therefore justified, though no doubt it can be further developed as a tool of political analysis at grass-roots level.

Table III*

Caste ranking	*Percentage of population*	*Percentage of seats in panchayat*	*Percentage of seats in panchayat samiti*
Higher Castes			
(brahmin, rajput, mahajan)	20	29.3	75.7
Middle Castes			
(jat, gujar)	40	31.5	14.6
Lower Castes			
scheduled castes	20	13.6	—
scheduled tribes (meena)	5	5.8	2.4
Others			
(kumavath, muslims, others)	15	19.8	7.3**
Total	100	100.0	100.0

* Data pertains to one of the panchayat samitis studied.
** Exclusive of Kumavaths.

Some other important demographic characteristics which need to be noted are:

1. There is a positive tendency to elect younger people belonging to the age group of 30-40 and 40-50 years, more from the former than from the latter.

2. The panchas belong to all occupational groups, including those who come from the backward sections of the rural community, who, in sociological terms, are at times even considered as 'polluting.'

3. About 65 per cent of the total panchayat members are agriculturists and another 10 per cent belong to the class of moneylenders. This distinction cannot, however, always be maintained because quite a few moneylenders are agriculturists as well and vice-versa. The panchayat members who are here reported to be belonging to the money lending class are, however, regular moneylenders.

The parent members of a panchayat samiti are those who are

sarpanchas of its constituent panchayats. The demographic characteristics of the sarpanchas have already been noted. However, there is an important aspect pertaining to the duality that goes with the office of sarpanch, who is both the head of panchayat and an *ex-officio* member of panchayat samiti. Since all sarpanchas become *ex-officio* members of panchayat samiti, the prospective candidates for the post of pradhanship begin to canvass for the support of sarpanchas at an early date—sometimes long before their actual election. The panchayat elections thus assume the form of a trial of strength between rival candidates for the office of pradhanship. They make active efforts to get their supporters elected to various panchayats as sarpanchas. They do not themselves contest the elections for sarpanchship because once they secure the entry of majority of sarpanchas from among their own supporters into the panchayat samiti, they hope to be coopted as its members, and later to contest successfully for the post of pradhanship. This is what we saw in two of the three panchayat samitis which we studied.[16]

As a corollary to the constant lobbying and canvassing on the part of various claimants for pradhanship, each panchayat samiti, from the very beginning, finds itself divided into two or three rival groups. They are thus faction-riden since their very inception. In all the three panchayat samitis which we studied the opposite factions could be clearly identified. In the case of one, the factional groups were in existence even before the introduction of panchayati raj. In another case, the conditions were such that the factions would have arisen irrespective of panchayati raj. In the third case, out of two rivals for pradhanship one withdrew completely from the scene after having been defeated at the polls. Consequently, no clear factions emerged.

Panchayati raj can thus be said to have aggravated village factionalism. It may also be pointed out that the opposing factions in a panchayat samiti generally centre around one or two leading personalities. The party or ideological considerations do not play any part and even when they do (as it was found in the post-third general election period) their role is at best subsidiary. This is reflected in the ceaseless shifts in the pattern of group loyalties and realignment of factions. The pradhan of one of the

16. For the entire state of Rajasthan 60, out of a total of 222, prahdans in as many panchayat samitis belonged to the category of coopted membership.

panchayat samitis had to fight a tough battle against his main rival who could not be coopted just for want of a single vote. The defeated pradhan collected the signatures of one-third members and introduced a motion of 'no confidence' in the hope of dislodging the pradhan. He was dismayed to find, however, that many of his supporters had crossed the floor by the time the 'no confidence' motion came up for actual discussion. In fact, nobody voted in his favour at the time of final reckoning.

Not merely the pendulum of group loyalties swings but also the group leaders themselves move from one party to another. They are seldom tightly bound to any party. The pradhan of one of the panchayat samitis was thus found to have aligned himself with three parties—the Congress (with two breakways), the Socialists and the Swatantra. Another pradhan started as a Congress sympathiser but later became violently anti-Congress and shifted his centre of sympathies from the Congress to the Swatantra Party. The third pradhan—though a Congress sympathiser and for sometime, an active Congress worker but not a member—was often heard to be declaring that his sympathies might ultimately shift in favour of the Communist Party.[17]

It may also be noted that leadership at the panchayat and panchayat samiti levels is in close touch with the state level politics. Each panchayat samiti falls, more or less, under the influence zone of one minister or the other. At times the fortunes of panchayat samiti fluctuate with the fortune of the minister concerned. For example, early in 1963 the panchayat portfolio passed from the hands of the Agiculture Minister to the Chief Minister. This apparently simple administrative change disturbed the balance of the political scale of panchayat samitis all over Rajasthan. One of the panchayat samitis under our enquiry had to turn against the pradhan who was put under arrest on charges and allegations that were pending against him for a long time. The fact is that not merely party alignments but also intra-party factions have percolated down to local rural levels. This is the one unmistakable conclusion that follows from the study of the emerging pattern of rural leadership at the panchayat samiti level.

17 [illegible] political consciousness [illegible] in a state of flux. To a [illegible] parties from the rural [illegible] long will such a fluid state continue?

Another trend which we observed at the panchayat samiti level deserves particular mention. It is that the group alignments cut across 'caste ties', since it is normally not possible to have majority of sarpanchas from a particular caste. Here one sees power alignments taking shape on the basis of interest rather than caste, though the latter is also exploited whenever possible.

The parent members of zila parishad are the pradhans of the constituent panchayat samitis. The important point to be noted in the case of large districts is that the parent members are outnumbered by associate members. There were 17 pradhans, 7 M.Ps and 17 M.L.As in the zila parishad which we studied. This means that the parent members who are none else but the pradhans are in minority.[18]

As in the case of panchayat samiti so also in the case of zila parishad the alignments appear to be outscoring the caste barriers. This can be substantiated with reference to the dramatic (behind the curtain) manner in which the proposal for a 'no confidence' motion against a pramukh was dropped. As already pointed out, the composition of zila parishad underwent a complete political change after the third general elections when 13 of the 17 legislative seats in the district under study were captured by the Swatantra Party and 2 by the Jan Sangh, leaving only 2 for the Congress. The pramukh being a pro-Congress man (he was an M.L.A. elected on Congress ticket during 1957-62) was regarded as an obstacle by some of the newly elected M.L.As who planned to bring a 'no confidence move' against him. However, some of the pro-Swatantra pradhans refused to support this move on the ground that the pramukh was a well meaning person and that he should not be voted out. Though it is not possible to judge the political motives of the persons involved in the affair, it can definitely be asserted that during this period a number of cross-party alignments were formed. The possibility that there would emerge interest groups rather than caste groups is therefore always there, since it is not possible to have a majority of pradhans from one and the same caste at the zila parishad level. In the zila parishad

18. This has certain significance for the decision making process, as it raises the distinct possibility of pradhans being out-numbered by other (coopted and associate) members. Though such a division may not immediately result in a head on clash, it may act as an indirect restraint on the freedom of pradhans, including their initiative, expression and action. This appears to be one of the unforeseen implications of giving associate membership to the legislative and parliamentary representatives in the zila parishad. It needs to be reviewed at the highest level.

under study, for example, three castes (brahmins, rajputs and jats) were evenly matched, none of them being in a position to dominate by itself.

To sum up the main findings of the foregoing analysis, it may be said that panchayati raj has been instrumental in throwing up a new type of local rural leadership which belongs to the relatively young age group and is drawn from a wide occupational base. The leadership is drawn mainly from the ranks of agriculturists and money lending classes. The higher classes of rural society dominate at the panchayat samiti level. It has been possible for the backward classes to find adequate representation at the panchayat level in proportion to their numerical strength. It has, however, not been possible for them to do so at the panchayat samiti level in spite of their numerical strength at least in a few cases. The panchayati raj institutions have also failed to activise the large bulk of female population who perhaps have very little chances of securing electoral success on account of the compulsions of social backwardness. There was not a single parent woman member in the three panchayat samitis which we studied. In fact, no woman tried to contest for a seat. Let alone women, the panchas also have to go a long way before they could become real partners in panchayati raj institutions. As it is now, panchayati raj seems to begin and end with sarpanchas and pradhans.

As far as the influence of caste is concerned, it appears that it is at work with a greater force in the elections of panchas. In the case of elections of sarpanchas and, to a greater extent, in the elections of pradhans and pramukhs, inter-caste alignments are inevitable and are at work. The panchayati raj structure has provided a forum, at least at the second and the third tiers where caste loyalties are cut through by the formation of power alignments and interest groups based on factors other than caste. Caste factions are in the process of transformation. These are getting transformed into political factions—at times even to the extent of losing their original identity. This should ultimately strengthen the democratic base in Rajasthan. At present, however, the villagers are alarmed to find each panchayat samiti, panchayat and the village being divided into two halves—the majority group and the minority group. The divisive tendencies existed even in the pre-decentralisation days, though these have been aggravated in the wake of panchayati raj, particularly as a result of election politics.

Coopted Membership

According to the provision of cooptation of woman to panchayats, all panchayats in the three panchayat samitis under study coopted two women each as no woman had become a panch through direct election. The women so coopted as members in the three panchayat samitis numbered 82, 66 and 42 respectively. The presence of women (coopted) members was however just normal. In most cases very old women belonging to the age group of 50 and above were coopted. A large majority of them were widows, mainly those belonging to the household of sarpanchas or other influential members of panchayat. This should not be looked upon merely as a case of favouritism—there is also the other side to it. The village women have a natural inhibition in participating in public life. It is easier to get over the inhibition of female members of the household of sarpanchas or other influential members than that which is possible in the case of others.

As far as cooptation of representatives from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is concerned, the need to coopt such persons did not arise in a large number of panchayats. Either such persons had become parent members of panchayats or the population criterion for cooptation of scheduled tribes was not fulfilled. In one of the panchayat samitis under study, scheduled castes' representatives were coopted in only 17 of the 41 panchayats, while the scheduled tribes' representatives were coopted in only 11 panchayats.

In none of the panchayat samitis under study the president of the gram sabha of a gramdan village was coopted. In fact, no such persons were available. In all the three panchayat samitis, two women, one representative of cooperative societies and two persons having experience in public life were coopted. The position with regard to cooptation of persons belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes differed from one panchayat samiti to another. In two panchayat samitis, two members belonging to scheduled castes were coopted. In the third panchayat samiti, only one person was required to be coopted as one such person had already become a parent member.

Similarly, with respect to scheduled tribe representation, one such person was coopted in two cases, but in the third panchayat samiti no such person was required to be coopted as

several persons belonging to scheduled tribes had already become its parent members. Cooptation at the panchayat samiti level with regard to scheduled castes and tribes and women representatives is thus only a marginal device having limited utility which may steadily decrease as more and more of such representatives are elected as parent members.

Cooptation is done by the parent members after nominations are invited. In this context it may be emphasized that a candidate for cooptation has to be proposed and seconded by a member of panchayat samiti, that is, by sarpanchas. Consequently only those persons who can enlist the support of at least two sarpanchas can expect to get themselves coopted. Voting by secret ballot takes place if the candidates number more than the number of seats to be filled. *Since the election of pradhan takes place after all* cooptations are made, the candidates for pradhanship are always interested in securing cooptation of their own supporters so that their voting strength may increase. In fact, in the case of two panchayat samitis under study, cooptation assumed great significance as the candidates for pradhanship themselves wanted to secure membership through cooptation. The political dimensions of cooptation can be best visualised from the following sketch illustrating a few cases of cooptation in two of the three panchayat samitis which we studied.

1. In one of the panchayat samitis among the candidates for pradhanship one was already a sarpanch and another wanted to be coopted. There was almost equal voting strength of the rival candidates. The balance was to be tilted with the help of cooptation which took place on the basis of 'list voting'. All those who belonged to the camp of one of the candidates for pradhanship cast their votes in favour of the candidates aligned to their own group. The victorious candidate was thus to be assured a support of 8 members who were to be coopted. It is for this reason that the candidates for pradhanship very carefully set up their own supporters or relatives as candidates for cooptation so that they could bank upon their support in the panchayat samiti. The person who wanted to enter into the panchayat samiti through cooptation lost by one vote. Similar was the fate of the other 7 candidates sponsored for cooptation by his group. The political future of this candidate for pradhanship was completely sealed because of two reasons. Firstly, he had not sought election as a sarpanch in the hope

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of being coopted. Secondly, his rival candidate for pradhanship got additional support of coopted members in the panchayat samiti.

2. In the other panchayat samiti both the candidates for pradhanship wanted to seek election through cooptation. Here again, the voting strength in the panchayat samiti of the two rival candidates was almost equal. Both the candidates sponsored 6 other candidates for cooptation. Here also the voting followed the pattern of 'list voting.' One of the candidates lost by one vote. The rival not only got coopted but also gained the support of 6 coopted members in the panchayat samiti which installed him into the office of pradhanship. The coopted members were expected to be always at his back or in his support because of the two women members, one was his sister and the other his sister-in-law. The other coopted members were also his trusted men. It is obvious that cooptation has been utilised by the pradhans as a weapon for adding to their voting strength. Cooptation has also been used as a political reward by the pradhan for the supporters of dominant group or for those who lost in direct elections. In one panchayat samiti, three such persons who had lost at the panchayat elections were later coopted as members of the panchayat samiti. The fourth who was engaged in organising support for the prospective pradhan and who could not contest the panchayat elections was also coopted. He, in fact, got the up-pradhanship of the panchayat samiti as a reward for his organisational work.

Cooptation at the panchayat samiti level has thus not resulted in the election of specialists or experts. The motivation behind cooptation of representatives of backward sections of society or of women has also assumed political overtones. Cooptation has simply been utilised as a political device to strengthen the position of pradhan of the dominating group. If the provisions for cooptation were not there, the dominance of pradhan and his group would have been in jeopardy at least in two of the three panchayat samitis which we studied, as the two opposite groups were otherwise more or less evenly matched. Cooptation, however, tilted the scales in favour of one group. The loosers, though enjoying almost equal strength in the pre-cooptation stage, became a distinct minority as a result of cooptation.

One of the senior officers in the Development Department at the state level was, however, of the opinion that even as a political device cooptation has fulfilled one of its major objectives, namely, improving the position of a group which would have otherwise enjoyed a rather precarious majority and thus would not have been in a position to function with confidence which comes only from a position of strength If this argument is accepted, cooptation may be said to have fulfilled one of its legitimate purposes But at what cost? It has to be remembered here that the cost has been much too heavy The minority group is denied all the benefits as they are monopolised exclusively by the dominating group which takes pride in being partisan in outlook and discriminating in its attitude

The experience with cooptation (as has been elaborated elsewhere in the report) has also been unhappy in the functional context The coopted members do not take any active interest in the panchayat samiti affairs They have been more or less silent spectators or have toed the line of the dominating group The persons coopted as representatives of scheduled castes and tribes would attend the meetings fairly regularly but would rarely participate in the discussions The women members would not be regular even in attending the meetings, let alone the question of their taking any active part The two members coopted for their experience in public life, etc (a category of cooptation through which one of the pradhans succeeded in fitting himself and in which the other candidate for pradhanship failed) have given a better account of themselves Out of 6 such members in the three panchayat samitis under study, at least three turned out to be fairly dominating One of these became the pradhan and another up-pradhan after having been widely tipped for pradhanship At the same time, the remaining three coopted members failed to take any significant initiative and remained only faithful 'yes-men of their respective pradhans The three persons coopted from the managing committees of cooperative societies fulfilled the statutory qualifications only nominally They were in no way distinguished in the field of cooperation and failed to provide any expert advice in this matter to the panchayat samiti

Thus, as far as the specific categories of cooptations go, it is clear that cooptation of women and representatives of scheduled castes and tribes has not served any genuine interest, except giving

a formal representation to the backward sections of our society. Cooptation of members of the managing committees of co-operative societies also does not make any material difference to the working of panchayat samitis or of the cooperatives. Finally, cooptation of persons having experience in public life has served as a way of backdoor entry for all such persons who for one reason or the other did not want to contest panchayat elections but nevertheless were keen on getting into the panchayat samiti and also to become its pradhan, if their manipulations could square with their political ambitions. The qualifications prescribed for this category of cooptation are so vague that almost anybody can fulfil them.

The provision of cooptation of two women and one person each from scheduled castes and tribes has been made applicable in the case of zila parishads also. The experience of zila parishad, however, shows that such a provision is rather superfluous. Cooptation in this regard takes place if no parent member of zila parishad belongs to these categories. Since associate members (M.L.As and M.Ps) are also treated as parent members, there is hardly any need for cooptation of members belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

This is more so because seats in the Legislative Assembly as well as in the Lok Sabha are reserved for persons belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. They, therefore, automatically become members of zila parishad. As far as women are concerned, the need for their cooptation in the zila parishad under study did not arise as, prior to the third general elections, it had one lady M.P. and one lady M.L.A. as its members. After the third general elections, it had one lady M.P. and one lady M.L.A. (the persons being different now) as its members. Cooptation of women is also not always necessary. There were only two coopted members in the zila parishad which we studied; one was coopted as persident of the central cooperative bank and the other in the category of persons having experience in public life, etc.

Cooptation at the zila parishad level thus normally does not have much political significance. However, in the case of the zila parishad which we studied, it acquired great importance as the coopted representative of the central cooperative bank became its pramukh. It may be mentioned here that this pramukh was

prominent in his own right as well. He was a Congress M.L.A. during 1957-62. He however lost in the third general elections which he fought as a pramukh of zila parishad. The other coopted member showed very little interest in the affairs of the zila parishad so much so that our research officers could not interview him in spite of their best efforts. Cooptation is thus a device having limited utilitarian applicability.

If we are now to take a cumulative view of cooptation in relation to the three tiers of the panchayati raj structure, the overall picture appears to be rather depressing. The following general observations may be made in this regard by way of summing up of the working of the principle of cooptation in panchayati raj.[19]

1. Cooptation does not result in the addition of any specialist or expert in the real sense of the term. It also does not leave much scope for genuine representation of depressed classes or of women at any level. The criteria althrough has been political, most of all at the panchayat samiti level. The motivation behind cooptation is not to secure genuine representation or real expertise (as the case may be, depending on the category of cooptation) but to add to group strength. Even at the risk of digression, it may be pointed out that as far as the representation of depressed classes and women is concerned, the fault does not lie entirely with cooptation. These sections of rural society are neither articulate, nor have they become interest groups. This makes it possible for the members of the dominating group to manipulate and coopt them to suit their own political requirements. As these sections become conscious and politically articulate, the chances of misuse of this category of cooptation may probably decrease.

2. Cooptation has been used as a political device by the leaders of panchayati raj at various levels to reinforce their own position and reward their supporters and helpers. It has led to the strengthening of a group or group leaders *vis-a-vis* the rival groups and leaders.

3. As far as the contention that cooptation fulfils one of its legitimate purposes even when it adds to the voting strength

19. For further details and elucidation of the points summarised here see : '*A Report on the Working of Cooptation at the Panchayat Samiti Level* (mimeographed), preserved in the Rajasthan University Library, Jaipur.

of one group by strengthening its position and helping it to work with confidence is concerned, it has to be taken with a pinch of salt. It should not be forgotten that the disadvantages that accrue are far weightier than the advantages. It completely demoralizes the minority group which is denied all benefits and utilities.

4. At the panchayat samiti level especially the category of membership coopted on the basis of experience in public life, etc., has been used as a device for backdoor entry by those who are afraid of facing the panchayat electorate and are yet keen of manipulating themselves into power as pradhans. Such persons have tried to ensure that only their trusted supporters or followers get coopted to all the vacancies. They have thereafter utilised the additional voting strength to secure the office of pradhanship.

5. In cases where one of the groups in the panchayat samiti has already secured an overwhelming majority, cooptation has been used as a means to reward the loyal workers and faithful supporters.

6. The experience with cooptation has also not been happy in the functional context. The coopted members did not take any active interest in the panchayat samiti affairs; they remained more or less silent spectators or toed the line of the dominating group. The persons coopted as representatives of scheduled castes and tribes would attend the meetings fairly regularly but would rarely participate in the discussions. The women members would not be regular even in attending the meetings, let alone the question of their participation. The two persons coopted for their experience in public life, etc., gave a better account of themselves.

Associate Membership

All M.L.As whose constituency covers the panchayat samiti area are associate members of panchayat samiti. Out of three such associate members in the three panchayat samitis under study, one turned out to be just a non-entity while the other two played a significant role. The third also had a brief period of ascendancy. The M.L.A. in one of the panchayat samitis was an illiterate person belonging to a scheduled tribe. He therefore behaved just as a puppet in the hands of the pradhan,

who himself had definite plans of contesting the election for the Vidhan Sabha in 1962, when the constituency no longer remained reserved. The M.L.A. was almost invariably present in panchayat samiti meetings. He however lost his importence in the presence of the pradhan who commanded an overwhelming stature. The second M.L.A. however took a keen interest in the affairs of the panchayat samiti. To begin with, he was on friendly terms with the pradhan. But he broke away from the pradhan during the third general elections. The reason behind this parting of the ways was that while the M.L.A. was contesting elections on Swatantra Party ticket, the pradhan actively campaigned for the Congress Party candidate. As if to counteract this, the M.L.A. sponsored a motion of no confidence against the pradhan soon after the elections were over. Again, in the third case, the pradhan and the M.L.A. were hands in glove with each other for a brief period of time on account of their common political orientation. During this period the pradhan supported the M.L.A's party. Soon after the third general elections the two, however, fell apart.

One unmistakable trend that has resulted from the category of associate membership is the introduction of party politics in the affairs of panchayat samiti. The M.L.A. forces the pradhan to join one or the other political party. What deepens the possibilities of conflict is the fact that the pradhan is taken, not very wrongly either, as a potential rival of the M.L.A. Thus in the very nature of things the two are not likely to get on well.

The category of associate membership has been particularly meaningful in the case of zila parishad. Here, the total number of associate membership is very large, in fact, even larger than the total number of parent members. The associate membership at the zila parishad level consists of M.Ps and M.L.As.

Out of 7 M.Ps who were members of zila parishad in the pre-third general elections period, only two showed a keen interest in attending its meetings. The others hardly took any interest. For over six months two of the M.Ps did not care to take oath of membership. The situation did not improve even after the third general elections. If the experience of the zila parishad which we studied is any guide, the provision of giving associate membership to the M.Ps can not be said to have proved of any use.

As far as the M.L.As are concerned, they showed a keener interest in the working of zila parishad than the M.Ps. They were

also more regular in attending its meetings than the M.Ps. In the pre-third general elections period, when the zila parishad was Congress dominated and the M.L.As also came from the Congress Party, the M.L.As did not show much interest in terms of participation. There came, however, an interesting turn after the third general elections when the party composition of associate members underwent a complete transformation. Before the 1962 elections, six out of seven M.Ps and 10 out of 17 M.L.As from the district belonged to the Congress Party. As pointed out earlier, the M.L.As during this period did not pay any special attention to the working of zila parishad. For example, two of the M.L.As were Cabinet Ministers at the state level. They did not at all bother to attend the meetings of zila parishad. The opposition M.L.As, perhaps because they were in minority, also did not show any interest.

In the third general elections, however, the Congress Party captured 5 of the 7 Parliamentary seats and 13 of the 17 Assembly seats. Thus a compact block of 20 persons belonging to the opposition party was created in the zila parishad. The first meeting of the zila parishad held after the third general elections was rather stormy. The smooth functioning of the zila parishad under Congress majority appeared to be heading for a crash. The opposition members went to the extent of refusing to consider and adopt the annual budget. The meeting was abruptly adjourned in the midst of mounting confusion. It was feared, as the District Development Officer put it in a rather distressing tone,[20] that local affairs would now be dragged into the cockpit of party politics which would not be in the larger interest of panchayati raj and planned development. The fear become all the more true when immediately after the meeting there were talks of a motion of no-confidence being introduced against the pramukh.

However, the political wheel took another rather unexpected turn. The vehement opposition calmed down. They even adopted the budget in a meeting held three months later. The bitter Congress-Swatantra battle that many observers had predicted and which the non-Congress group of M.L.As and M.Ps was in a position to launch did not come about. The non-Congress M.Ps and

20. The reference is to a personal conversation between the Deputy Director and the District Development Officer after the meeting.

M.L.As thus extended a helping hand in developing the convention that, as far as possible, local affairs should not be viewed from party angle at the zila parishad level. For this they deserve all credit.

The zila parishad, once again, settled down to conduct its work on more or less non-partisan lines. Though the Swatantra M.Ps and M.L.As continued to attack the Congress domination of zila parishad and its policies, the division was not precipitated to a point affecting the solidarity of zila parishad as a district level local body. Decisions continued to be taken unanimously. The presence of non-Congress opposition made the proceedings of zila parishad livelier but less matter of fact and business like than before. The non-Congress opposition members could be credited with sharp critical observations which were at times constructive also. Thus while the category of associate membership tended to drag on the panchayat samitis in the cockpit of party politics, a similar situation did not crop up at the zila parishad level. It is heartening to note that at the zila parishad level persons belonging to different political parties could work together harmoniously, if an attitude of mutual accommodation is developed and the convention of looking at local problems from an essentially local angle is strengthened. If however one were to look at the category of associate membership strictly from the point of view of creative contribution both at the panchayat samiti and zila parishad levels, it could be said that generally the associate members have not made any subtantial contribution in terms of constructive criticisms or suggestions.

Method of Election

We are inclined to endorse the method of election of *parent members* except to the posts of sarpanch and pradhan.

Election of sarpach : As far as the office of sarpanch is concerned, the method of election needs to be changed. At present he is directly elected. In the nature of things he becomes more conspicuous as people's directly elected representative and more powerful than the panchas who are elected on ward-wise basis. This has three repercussions: *First*, the sarpanch develops a tendency to monopolise power in his own hands. He is not inclined to share it with other panchas whom he neglects. He prefers to act by himself rather than with his collea-

gues. The initiative of the panchas in turn is sapped. As it is, they are quite docile, so when the sarpahch does not provide any incentive for them to participate (he rather discourages them) they become confirmed non-entities. *Secondly,* the extra village pressures and manipulations come into play in the election of sarpanch. This can be understood in the light of the fact that the sarpanch is an *ex-officio* member of panchayat samiti and shares the privilege of electing pradhans and other sarpanchas. The prospective candidates for pradhanship therefore get interested in the election of sarpanchas and try to manipulate them into office. In the wake of direct election of sarpanch, factionalism therefore receives a fillip at the village level. The existing divisive tendencies are accentuated. If they do not exist, they are created. *Thirdly*, it is also possible that a directly elected sarpanch may not enjoy the confidence of the majority of panchas who at best may not cooperate with him and, at the worst, may obstruct him in the discharge of his day to day responsibilities. The team spirit which is the backbone of success of any elective institution may therefore be missing. Such situations would become all the more intriguing, as in the process of political awakening of the village India, when the panchas also become politically conscious and begin to assert themselves *vis-a-vis* a dominating sarpanch. *It is therefore suggested that the sarpanch should be indirectly elected by ward panchas from among themselves by a two-third majority.*[21]

One of our research officers has also recommended a system of recall for the post of sarpanchship. According to him the introduction of this system will offer two advantages. It would minimise the scope of political manipulations as the electorate would have to be woed before a petition for recall is made possible.

21. One of the research officers and the Assistant Director were of the opinion that this change will be costly in terms of democracy. The element of direct election already obtains in the three tier structure only to minimal extent. If the sarpanch is also to be indirectly elected, the democratic element would further receive a setback. The other members of the project team, however, felt that the sacrifice would be worth making in the larger interest of participatory democracy in which power should not be allowed to become a monopoly of an individual or a group as far as possible. It is, however, conceded that the prospective candidates for sarpanchship may find it easier to manipulate the panchas than the village electorate. The danger may be mitigated (though not completely done away with) if the sarpanch is elected by a two-third majority. This will serve to some extent as a safeguard against monopolistic trends, besides ensuring team spirit and cooperation between the sarpanch and the panchas. It will also contribute its mite towards activising the panchayat as an institution which today for all practical purposes is *sarpanch personified.*

It would also bring a sense of ownership and belonging to the rural people *vis-a-vis* the sarpanch who may also learn to own his responsibility to the electorate and work in the service of the people. By way of a negative argument it was also mentioned that recall should be preferred to the system of vote of no-confidence by the (ward-wise) elected members of panchayats against the directly elected sarpanchas. The critic felt that the present system of vote of no-confidence was rather anomalous. For, the sarpanch being directly elected by the entire electorate, the panchas who are voted into office by the ward electorate would not have the power to dislodge him.

It may however be argued that the system of recall presupposes a certain level of political maturity on the past of the rural population which, at present, is lacking. The sarpanch even today does not work institutionally through the panchayat and thereby limits the initiative of the panchas. He will become all the more arbitrary in his attitude and action than what he is today once the fear of vote of no-confidence is withdrawn. The panchas can bring a vote of no-confidence only by three-fourth majority. This is quite an adequate democratic safeguard. Even the Rajasthan High Court in their decision in the case of *Megh Singh vs. the State* have held that there is nothing unusual or unconstitutional about the provision of removal of a sarpanch, who is directly elected into office, by a no-confidence motion of panchas who are elected on a ward-wise basis. Elected representatives of the people, their Lordship held, could remove a person not elected by them but directly elected by the electarate. The group therefore feels that the suggestion of recall is rather premature at the present stage of political awakening at the rural level. It is likely to cause more harm than good, particularly when it has not succeeded much even in the advanced democracies of the West.

Election of Pradhan : The story of election of pradhan in the three panchayat samitis which we studied is a tale of unseeming manipulation for power alliance and groupism. The politics of election of pradhan promotes factionalism both at the panchayat samiti and panchayat level. The game of power politics has to be accepted as a part of the democratic process. It cannot be eliminated altogether, though efforts can be made to minimise its baneful effects. *It is with this end in view that we suggest that the electoral college for the office of pradhan should be broad-based.* The

panchayat samiti members together with other parent members of all panchayats should elect the pradhan. This will have several advantages. First, it would not be easy for the pradhan to consolidate his position through groupism or factionalism. Secondly, as a corollary to the first, the benefits will be more equitably distributed. Thirdly, factionalism even it comes into being will not be strengthened as monopolisation of benefits will not be easily possible. Fourthly, the election of sarpanch will not remain an exclusive privilege of sarpanchas who would have to treat themselves as *primus inter-pares,* and not a class of superior non-officials. Fifthly, it will bring up the panchas from the political oblivion into which they have now been thrown.[22]

Coopted Membership

At present cooptation obtains at all levels of the three tier structure of panchayati raj. This should continue with such modifications as are suggested elsewhere in the report. As far as the question of the categories of interests for which cooptation should be permitted is concerned, we have the following observations to make.

1. It is true that the traditional view does not encourage the village women to participate in political affairs. It is also a fact that it is not always easy to get the right type of women representatives and as such the near relatives of sarpanchas or of pradhans (as the case may be) often get coopted. It is also true that participation of coopted women members is almost negligible. In spite of all this cooptation of women should continue at all levels in the three tier structure in the larger

22. One of our research officers has, however, offered a radically different suggestion. He strongly feels that the pradhan should be elected directly. Pleading for direct election of pradhan, he observes that "it would be a contradiction to load the institution of panchayat samiti with all the powers and yet not to allow it to exercise free franchise and direct election for the very office which is the nucleus of all power and activities with which panchayati raj is saturated." His argument is that the pradhan is not inclined to act institutionally even today and that the situation would not worsen if he is elected directly. He also feels that direct elections would make the electorate politically articulate, inject an elected group into an otherwise *ex-officio* body and help the pradhan from the politics of groupism. Other research officers were, however, of the opinion that direct election to the office of pradhan would not be in keeping with the philosophy of panchayati raj which demands decentralisation of power and benefits. The powers so decentralised will also have to be exercised institutionally. There are already trends which indicate that the pradhan is moving in the direction of monopolising his powers, the opportunity for which would be still more if he were to be directly elected. It is for this reason that we are not favourably inclined to recommend direct election to the post of pradhan.

interest of democracy and, more than that, as a potentially effective instrument of social change in rural India.

2. Likewise, cooptation of scheduled castes and tribes should also continue at all the three levels as we are nationally committed (and rightly so) to ameliorate their lot and help them to improve their socio-economic conditions. Neither misuse of the principle of cooptation nor the depressingly ineffective role of the coopted members should be a ground for doing away with this category of cooptation. The regeneration of scheduled castes and tribes is essentially a slow and a drawn-out process and has to be accepted as such.

3. Cooptation of persons on the basis of administrative experience leaves much scope for manipulation of political and party gains. It may be sound in principle to have a non-official coopted member with administrative insight to review the suggestions and advise the officials both for democratisation of bureaucracy and for retaining the advantages of sound administrative practices and procedures. The principle has however not worked out in practice. Some qualifications may be prescribed for cooptation of this type so that its misuse is checked. If this is not possible, it may even be desirable to do away with the provision altogether. However, we feel that the former is a better alternative and hence should be accepted both in principle and practice.

4. Cooptation of a representative of cooperatives at the panchayat samiti level is sound in principle. It embodies an attempt to forge a link between the cooperative and the panchayat samiti. This category of cooptation should therefore continue. It may be however mentioned that harmonious relationship between the cooperative and the panchayat samitis has not yet developed.

5. Cooptation of a representative from the central cooperative bank at the zila parishad level is useful and should continue.

Timing and Method of Cooptation : The timing and method of cooptation also needs to be reviewed. The following are our observations.

1. We have suggested indirect election to the post of sarpanch. As a corollary to this, it is suggested that cooptation at the panchayat level should take place when it is con-

stituted and when the election of sarpanch has taken place. Similarly at the panchayat samiti level, cooptation of members should take place after the election of pradhan.

2. As far as cooptation of a representative of cooperative societies at the panchayat samiti level is concerned, two suggestions have been made. One of the suggestions is that members of cooperative societies in the area should form the electoral college for this purpose. It is true that this suggestion, if implemented, would broad-base the electorate and therefore minimise the chances of misuse of voting. The 'project team' however does not subscribe to this view, mainly because it is not practicable. The 'team' recommends that the coopted member should be one who is a member of the board of directors of the cooperatives concerned. The board of directors may be asked to suggest a panel of three directors, one of whom may be coopted by the panchayat samiti.[23]

3. It was also suggested that all coopted members at the panchayat level should form into a joint electoral college for electing their representatives to the panchayat samiti. The 'project team' is however of the opinion that for the time being *status quo* may be maintained in this respect.

4. Coopted members should enjoy the right to vote, the right to contest elections except to the office of pradhan, and the right to participate in the deliberations of panchayati raj institutions.

Associate Membership

The suggestions regarding associate membership are divided into two parts: *associate members at the panchayat samiti level* and *associate membership at the zila parishad level.* As far as the first is concerned, the 'project team' is of the opinion that it should be abolished as it only encourages party politics and groupism.

As far as the second is concerned—*associate membership at the zila parishad level*—the 'project team' recommends its retention. Here, the associate members have a promotional role to play. They constitute a joint forum representing local, state and national interests. The M.L.As may take local issues to the state legisla-

23. It may be added that when a representative of cooperatives ceases to be a director he should also cease to be a coopted member. This should also be the procedure for cooptation of a member from the central cooperative bank to the zila parishad.

ture and the M Ps to the Parliament As the panchayati raj institutions get firmly rooted, the associate members will have to discharge their promotional role The chances of their political survival will then be closely linked with their ability to forge happy relations between the panchayati raj structure and the state and national legislatures

III

Infra Institutional Structure

APART from the principal units like panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad, the structural aspects of which have been dealt with in the earlier chapter, the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act provides for a few subordinate, associate and parallel units. The discussion which follows is concerned with the working of these institutions.

I

At the Panchayat Level

Subordinate Units

The statute and the rules do not have any provision for the institution of sub-committees at the panchayat level. Most panchayats have however constituted *ad hoc* committees to carry out specific tasks. In one of the panchayat samitis under study, each panchayat had constituted a special committee—known as nirman samiti or construction committee—consisting of 3 to 5 members.

The nirman samiti is responsible for all public works in the panchayat area. To it have been delegated all the necessary financial and administrative powers in regard to construction works. The working of nirman samitis however leaves much to be desired. In spite of them, the execution of public works is far behind the schedule. It will however be wrong to put the entire blame on the nirman samiti alone. Short term assignments attract better personnel than long term committees like the nirman samiti; the reason being that an average villager is not in a position to

spare much of his time to serve on such committees. The persons serving on nirman samitis have therefore not always been of the right type.

There is then the problem of inadequate and untimely supply of funds. In some cases funds were transferred by the panchayat samitis rather late and, in others, held up by the sarpanchas through whom such funds are routed to the nirman samitis. It was also alleged that in the process of transmission, the funds depleted due to misappropriation, misuse and the like. No specific illustrations of this type were however reported. But all this naturally affects the execution of public works which are entrusted to the nirman samitis.

The funds for public works are given on the basis of matching grants, sometimes at 50:50 basis and, at others, at 40:60 basis. In either case, it is extremely difficult for nirman samitis to raise their part of the grant. It was reported that the public works were undertaken entirely out of government grants and that matching grants were only recorded on paper. The financial resources of nirman samitis are therefore extremely limited and hence the works remained incomplete. Generally the members of nirman samitis are also not technically competent to handle these works. The failures of nirman samiti are therefore mostly due to external factors. They are not inherent in the institution itself.

We also came across with some other *ad hoc* committees which have been constituted for specific purposes such as purchase of bullocks, locust control, etc. These committees have given a good account of themselves perhaps because they do not normally have to put up with the hardships which mar the functioning of nirman samitis. We feel that the sub-committees would be useful in the day to day working of panchayats if they are properly organised. To activise the panchas, it may be good to evolve a portfolio system by which each panch is made in charge of one or more activities. It may also be useful to constitute under the chairmanship of panchas functional sub-committees at the panchayat level. The committee should be empowered to coopt other members and the chairman made responsible for the activities of the committee. The funds at the disposal of panchayats could then be routed through these committees which would minimise the chances of misuse of public money.

Associate Institutions

At the instance of zila parishad and a former district development officer considerable emphasis was laid on the development of such associate organisations as mandals and mahila mandals. Panchayats are constantly urged to promote these institutions and contribute towards their success by giving financial assistance to them. The experiment has however not been quite successful due to a number of reasons.

The promotion of associate organisations of this type presupposes a certain level of development in rural outlook and attitudes which do not exist now. This should not however lead to any undue pessimism. The success of these institutions should be judged from a long term point of view. As and when the process of social change gets stimulated the prospects of these institutions would brighten up. If they undertake any activity for which provision exist in the block budget, and if panchayat asks for it, such funds may be made available to them. By way of token contribution some funds from the block budget earmarked for these activities could be transferred to panchayats for sponsoring the activities of these institutions. Unless panchayats are given such funds, they cannot be expected to stimulate the associate institutions.

It will be helpful if the primary school teachers are associated with the organisation of navyuvak mandals and mahila mandals. It will also be worthwhile to enhance the stature of these institutions by inviting their representatives to attend the panchayat meetings. An active liaison could thus be developed between panchayats and associate organisations which in turn would help in strengthening the growth of these institutions from within.

Coordinate Institutions

The cooperatives including the marketing cooperatives are supposed to be the coordinate institutions of panchayats. In practice the two sets of institutions have however tended to become rival or parallel bodies. Theoretically speaking, there should not be any conflict between the two. The two institutions have similar objectives; the only difference being that panchayats are political in character while cooperatives are economic in nature. The two are inter-dependent bodies. The cooperatives are the supplying agencies of panchayats. It is also to be noted that the

value of understanding and cooperation between these two units is basic to the success of the development programmes in the villages. This can be highlighted with reference to an example which was brought to our notice in one of the panchayat samitis under study. Here a road which the P.W.D. had refused to construct even on higher rates was constructed with the cooperation of panchayats and cooperatives, both of which were in the hands of one and the same group.

However, in the three panchayat samitis under study, the cooperative and the panchayat often acted as rival institutions. This was because they were in the hands of rival groups. The group which did not succeed in capturing the panchayat turned to capture the cooperative. Having thus pitched themselves, they took pride in obstructing the activities of each other. The situation is really intriguing because at the panchayat level there is hardly any direct link between the panchayat and the cooperative. If this continues, both the cooperative and the panchayat will not only get discredited in the eyes of the villager but also the development programme will suffer. To prevent this, it is necessary to promote an organic relationship between these sets of institutions. For this purpose the following suggestions may be considered.

1. Panchayat should have the right to appoint some members on the managing body of cooperatives.

2. The funds provided to cooperatives should flow through panchayats.

3. The sarpanch and the panch holding the portfolio of cooperation should be made *ex-officio* members of the managing body of village cooperatives.

4. The chairman of the cooperative society should also be an *ex-officio* member of the panchayat.

The emphasis which the Central Government is laying on the role of cooperatives as distributive agency will be meaningful only when the conflict between the panchayat and the cooperative is resolved. This further underlines the gravity of the situation which has to be attended to with all the speed and resolution.

II

At the Panchayat Samiti Level

Subordinate Units

The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act lays

The trouble does not merely lie with the provision of cooptation. The process of constituting standing committee is equally faulty. The members of panchayat samiti, both parent and coopted, elect members to the standing committees to serve and run them by a simple majority. Under the present system it is therefore possible for the dominating group to completely monopolise membership of these committees and thereby to use them to their exclusive advantage. This is not merely a theoretical possibility; it has been borne out by our field experience. The benefits are mostly shared by the dominant group. This naturally deepens factions and aggravates politics. It is therefore recommended that election to standing committees should be held on the basis of proportional representation. It is true that in the initial stages it may be a little difficult to acquaint the villagers with the details of the system of proportional representation. But the trouble is worth taking in view of the advantages that are likely to accrue in terms of minority representation and equitable distribution of benefits and utility.

Another important lacuna which has come to our notice is that the persons coopted to panchayat samitis are not always placed on the standing committees on the basis of their qualifications as a result of which the services of experts remain unutilised at the crucial decision making levels. This can be seen from the table in the following page.

The table shows that very little effort has been made to associate the coopted members with the committees in which they could have served best. The reason is that these committees are constituted on political considerations—all standing committee seats are given to the members of the dominant group for their loyalty and support. The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act needs to be amended with a view to make the coopted members serve on the standing committees in accordance with the interest which they are expected to represent and the expertise which they possess. The model outlined in Table VI may be adopted for this purpose.

The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act also stipulates retirement of one-third members from the standing committees each year by rotation. Theoretically, it is a sound provision, but not in practice. The procedural details for retiring

Table V

Coopted members	*No. of members*	*Members of standing committee*
	Panchayat Samiti : D	
Women	2	Chairman, Mahila Kalyan Member, Mahila Kalyan
Scheduled Caste	2	Member, Social Services Member, Social Services
Scheduled Tribe	1	...
Cooperative	1	Member, Cooperatives
Public Life	2	Member, Administration Member, Administration
	Panchayat Samiti : J	
Women	2	Member, Education Member, Education
Scheduled Caste	1	...
Scheduled Tribe	1	...
Cooperative	1	...
Public Life	2	Chairman, Administration Member, Administration
	Panchayat Samiti : S	
Women	2	Member, Education
Scheduled Caste	2	...
Scheduled Tribe	...	...
Cooperative	1	Member, Finance & Administration
Public Life	2	Chairman, Education Member, Agricultural Production

Table VI

Category of Cooptation	*Standing Committee*
Women	Mahila Kalyan, Social Service and Social Education, Health
Scheduled Castes & Tribes	Social Service and Social Welfare, Administration*
Cooperation	Cooperatives, Agriculture
Public life, etc.	Administration, Agriculture
Krishi Nipun	Agriculture.

*We have suggested in Chapter II that cooptation to panchayat samiti under this category should be dropped. If the suggestion is accepted, the provision in question would automatically go out from the model.

members from the standing committees are neither full-proof nor a check against misuse of power. A number of weaknesses were noted. Among these the following deserve careful consideration.

1. The process of drawing lots from chits containing the names of members of the committee always gives rise to objections and allegations against the integrity of the pradhan. It may however be added that these allegations are generally not supported by facts or proofs.

2. It was observed that, though members are retired, the meetings for the election of new members are not held in time. The pradhan is empowered to issue notices for convening these meetings. But the elections take place only after considerable delay. In a few cases the elections were delayed even deliberately.

3. The provision of retirement does not serve any useful purpose. Most of the retiring members who are re-elected are those enjoying the support of the pradhan. In one of the panchayat samitis under study the composition of standing committees had not changed at all, even though the members had retired twice.

4. The provision of retirement also provides an opportunity to the pradhan to remove those who have fallen out with him or have not toed his line.

Judging by the ill-feeling, bickering and the partisan attitude which the provision of retirement has generated, it can be safely said that the provision has done greater harm than good. It interferes with the working of the standing committees. The vacancies are not filled for a long time. The energy and attention of members are diverted from constructive work to groupism and election politics. The term of the standing committees as also of panchayat samiti being 3 years only, it is obvious that the period is too short to allow for annual retirements. All that it does is to encourage the members to derive maximum benefits in the shortest possible time. Continuity of membership under these circumstances may well lead to the development of healthy conventions including active participation on the part of members. For these reasons it is recommended that the provision of retirement should be altogether abolished.

If one were to review the overall working of the standing committees, the trends which are easily discernable are monopolisation of their membership by the dominant group and accumulation of power and benefits in fewer hands. The participatory character of panchayati raj institutions is thus compromised, affecting even the distribution or flow of benefits. This is further borne out by our discussion in the following chapter.

From structural point of view, however, it may be pointed out that if the standing committees are properly constituted, they should be the best media of promoting interest and kindling a passion for participation among members. The ideal situation may be one in which each member has the opportunity to become a member of one or the other committee. It may be worthwhile therefore to increase the number and strength of these committees so that each member can be associated with their functioning. In case a member feels that his or her talent would be better utilised in some other committee, mutual transfer from one committee to another may also be permitted.

Associate Institutions

At the panchayat samiti or block level there is no network of associate institutions. One of the district development officers

was very keen on building up such a network. Though his efforts did not bear any fruit, an attempt should be made to develop block level organisations of different associate institutions such as mahila mandal, yuvak mandal, etc. This would enable the panchayat samiti to have a direct knowledge of the problems of these institutions. The later, in turn, would also become organisationally strong and in a better position to discover their identity.

III

At the Zila Parishad Level

Subordinate Units

The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, authorizes the zila parishad to constitute any number of sub-committees. The zila parishad which we studied had constituted the following sub-committees.

Table VII

Name		*Numbers of members*
Administration & Finance		8
Planning, Evaluation & Training		10
Production		9
Industries		8
Social Service		8
	Total	43

The total membership of the zila parishad is also 43. Each of them has thus been placed on one or the other sub-committee. It is an ideal situation where all members of a panchayati raj institution are associated with the working of these committees. The example needs to be emulated not merely by other zila parishads but also by other panchayati raj institutions.

It may be added that no rules have yet been framed for the composition of sub-committees. In the zila parishad which we studied a healty convention has however developed. Here the views of the members are ascertained in an informal way and their

preferences are noted Efforts are also made to accommodate every member on the sub-committee of his or her choice This is a healthy convention which should be fostered not only at this level but also as far as possible at all other levels of panchayati raj

The composition of members in the sub-committees of the zila parishad which we studied was correct in all respect except that as many as 7 M L As out of a total of 17 were members of a particular sub committee (production) The sub-committees on social service and education also included as many as five pradhans To some extent this reflects the 'social welfare' bias of panchayati raj But it also means exclusion of a large number of pradhans from the functional orbit of one of the most important sub committees agricultural production Since most of the pradhans of the zila parishad were active and progressive farmers, it would surely have been better had they been associated with the production sub-committee which is now dominated by M L As who are mostly non-agriculturists

IV

The Institutional Behaviour

There are two criteria for judging the behavioural pattern of panchayati raj institutions: the one quantitative and the other qualitative. The quantitative criterion can be spelled out in terms of regularity and frequency of meetings, attendance of members, duration of discussions and so on. The qualitative criterion is built around the points which form the main core of discussion and decision, and the level at which they are tackled. The two are inter-linked in such a way that they overlap each other. The discussion which follows is devoted to an analysis of the behavioural pattern of panchayati raj from quantitative and qualitative considerations.

I

Quantitative Analysis

Panchayat

There are wide variations in the number of meetings and proportion of attendance in different panchayat meetings. This is because no fixed rules have been laid down for the conduct of such meetings. Generally, the panchayats follow a weekly schedule and hold their meetings after an interval of seven days. In one of the panchayat samitis studied all panchayats adopted Sunday as the meeting day. This led to some opposition on the part of the block officials who were reluctant to attend meetings on a holiday. They actively canvassed for a change and ultimately succeeded in shifting the date of meeting of most panchayats from Sunday to some other week days. The greatest problem which the

panchayat usually faces is however the absence of any provision in the Panchayat Act for the recall of meetings which are adjourned due to lack of quorum.

The following table, showing the frequency of panchayat meetings in 14 selected panchayats, reveals that the minimum and maximum number of panchayat meetings held in 1961-62 was 21 and 54 respectively. It also shows that there was no quorum in about one-fourth of the meetings held.

Table VIII

Panchayat S.No.	*Panchayat meetings called (no)*	*Quorum not available (per cent)*
First	24	16
Second	30	27
Third	28	23
Fourth	26	14
Fifth	27	28
Sixth	39	25
Seventh	29	23
Eighth	21	30
Ninth	33	30
Tenth	31	15
Eleventh	43	20
Twelfth	30	15
Thirteenth	54	45
Fourteenth	23	8
Average	29	23

The attendance of sarpanchas and panchas is also far from being satisfactory. In the 14 selected panchayats the attendance record of sarpanchas was as follows.

Table IX

Attendance percentage	*Number of sarpanchas*	*Per cent to total*
25—49	2	15
50—74	3	21
75—99	9	65
	14	100

The table shows that none of the sarpanchas attended all the panchayat meetings. Only 9 of the 14 sarpanchas attended three-fourth of the meetings held. All the sarpanchas however attended at least 25 per cent of the total meetings held in their respective panchayats.

In the case of panchas the attendance record was as below.

Table X

Attendance percentage	*Number of panchas*	*Per cent to total*
Below 25	30	18.4
25—49	73	44.4
50—74	55	33.4
74—99	6	3.7
Cent per cent	—	—
	164	100.0

None of the 164 panchas attended all the meetings held. Only 18 per cent of them attended about 25 per cent of the total number of meetings held. About 3.7 per cent or 6 out of 164 panchas attended more than three-fourth of the meetings. Nearly

three-fifth (62 per cent) of them attended one-half of the total number of meetings held in a year This clearly brings out the unsatisfactory record of attendance of panchas in panchayat meetings, especially when it is compared with the record of sarpanchas, three-fifth or 64 per cent of whom had attended more than 75 per cent of such meetings

The agenda of panchayat meeting is prepared by the panchayat secretary, and affixed on the panchayat notice board It is not individually circulated to the members As a result the formal agenda does not receive the attention it should The members generally leave it to the sarpanch or to some other official who is present to initiate the discussion In case any panchayat samiti official is present, he or she gets the first chance to speak and initiate discussion on the problems pertaining to his or her field of activities. The officials, as already pointed out, are reluctant to attend panchayat meetings when these are held on Sundays or on any other holidays Generally, a number of them travel together in the official transport to attend such meetings On these occasions, especially if the vikas adhikari is also present, the panchayat meetings are well attended The officials explain, turn by turn, their procedures of work and the targets they are expected to achieve No formal business such as hearing of appeal is transacted

The paradox is that, though it is very difficult to hold a panchayat meeting, once a meeting begins it is seldom a dull event, as all matters ranging from local gossip to government administration are discussed Though the panchayat is mainly in charge of development work, all types of problems encountered in the panchayat area are discussed in these meetings The average villager (panchas and sarpanchas being no exception) considers panchayat to be an all purpose service institution

Panchayat Samiti

Panchayat samitis were earlier required to hold monthly meetings In May 1962 an amendment was introduced to fix the minimum limit to one meeting per quarter Of the 3 panchayat samitis studied, two adopted the system of quarterly meetings and the third, at the suggestion of one of its members, held bi monthly meetings

In the initial phase panchayat samitis were free to fix the date of their meetings For some time this created a great confusion

and made it difficult for district level officers to attend these meetings. The Zila Parishad, Jaipur, however realised the difficulty and a rationalised schedule of dates for panchayat samiti meetings in the district was drawn up. This was in general adopted by most panchayat samitis. The main feature of this schedule was that all the 17 panchayat samiti meetings were fixed at the beginning of the month so that the rest of the month could be devoted to the execution of the decisions taken at these meetings.

The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act empowers every panchayat samiti to hold special meetings. In the case of the panchayat samitis studied, the provision was mainly used to cover such issues as discussion of budget or retirement of members from the standing committees. In one of the panchayat samitis, however, such meetings were held quite frequently, almost a meeting each month and not per quarter. The following table shows the number of general and special meetings held in 1961 and 1962 by the three panchayat samitis studied.

Table XI

	1961			1962		
Panchayat samiti	*General meeting*	*Special meeting*	*Total*	*General meeting*	*Special meeting*	*Total*
'D'	12	3	15	10	4	14
'S'	7	5	12	8	1	9
'J'	7	3	10	8	1	9

Not even a single meeting had to be adjourned for want of quorum. The attendance was generally high. It seldom fell below 50 per cent. The pradhans were almost always present. In one of the panchayat samitis the pradhan attended 28 of the 30 meetings. In another panchayat samiti the pradhan attended 18 of the 21 meetings. The attendance of the pradhan in the third panchayat samiti was also high—about 75 per cent. But there was a stretch of six months during which he did not attend any meeting as he was busy in politics.

While the meetings of panchayat samiti are well attended, they

are not held punctually. The late arrival of members and the consequent delay in meeting were frequently reported by all the three panchayat samitis. Usually the proceedings started as soon as the requisite quorum was reached; others joined as and when they arrived.

The scheduled time for meetings is usually 11 A.M. but the peak attendance is reached only by 2 P.M. The meetings usually continue till late afternoon. They are generally adjourned by 5 P.M. In one of the panchayat samitis an interesting incident was noted. The headquarters of this panchayat samiti is situated on the Ajmer-Jaipur National Highway. Keeping in view the bus-schedules, the members had agreed to start the meetings at 8 A.M. and disperse at 2 P.M. at which time a convenient bus service was available. The officials, especially the vikas adhikari, protested against this arrangement whereupon the time schedule was changed from 8 A.M.—2 P.M. to 10 A.M.—5 P.M.

Apart from the non-officials, the presence of certain state and district level officers is a regular feature of panchayat samiti meetings in the Jaipur district. One of the former district development officers always stressed the need for having the district level officers in all such meetings and providing them the official vehicle for this purpose. The scheme was however not particularly successful. The attendance of state and district level officers at the panchayat samiti meetings was generally poor. This can be seen from Table XII showing the record of two of the three panchayat samitis studied.

The table shows that most of the district level officers attended only one meeting. The average attendance appears to be ridiculously low, particularly when one considers the fact that only 39 and 21 meetings were held in these panchayat samitis. In fact, in most panchayat samiti meetings the non-officials regretted the absence of district level officers. The attendance was more in one of the panchayat samitis as compared to the other, but it was unsatisfactory in both cases.

The agenda of panchayat meetings is prepared by the vikas adhikari. In two of the three panchayat samitis studied, the pradhan did not take any particular interest in the preparation of agenda, while in the third the vikas adhikari was fully in charge of this task. However, as the actual discussion embraces a wide variety of subjects, formal agenda is of nominal importance.

Table XII

Departmental representative	*No. of meetings attended (panchayat samiti)*	
	*S**	*D***
District Development Officer	1	—
Agriculture	2	1
Animal Husbandry	4	1
Cooperation	3	1
Irrigation	7	1
Medical and Health	3	—
Social Welfare	4	3
Education	4	—
Small Savings	3	1
Public Relation Officer	2	—
Assistant Collector	2	6
Ayurved	2	1
Soliders' Welfare Board	2	1

*Total number of meetings held—39
**Total number of meetings held—21

The agenda usually consists of those items which the panchayat samiti official want to bring to the notice of its members. The district development officers and the secretary of the zila parishad which we studied took special interest in the preparation of agenda of various panchayat samitis. Some idea of the frequency and nature of agenda items can be had from the following figures relating to one of the panchayat samitis under study.

Table XIII

Item	*Frequency**
Finance and Budget	14
Agriculture	13
Cooperation	10
Construction works	9
Panchayat	8
Adult Education	6
Standing Committees	6
Education	5
Administration	5
Supervision	4
Recoveries	2
Animal Husbundry	2
Primary Health Centre	1
By-laws	1
Question Hour	1
Others	23
	110

*Total number of meetings held was 21

The meetings of panchayat samiti are held in a peaceful and orderly manner. The pradhan or the up-pradhan act as the chairman of such meetings. In case both are absent, the members present select a chairman. In about half a dozen of such cases, there was no report of any conflict. The decisions of such *ad hoc* chairman were respected by the concerned pradhans.

The participation of members in the meetings of panchayat samiti is rather limited. About half-a-dozen people usually take active part in its deliberations. This is mainly due to the fact that most members rely on their group leaders to plead on their behalf. In all the panchayat samiti meetings there was not a single instance of a member being deniod the right to speak whenever he or she wanted to speak, though the number of

speakers remained small in all the three cases. On many occasions the pradhan and the vikas adhikari requested all the members to express their views, and no efforts were made to stop or postpone a discussion if the members felt inclined to thrash it out in detail. It was however noted that the pradhan and the vikas adhikari took more than half of the discussion hours.

The participation of other officials is limited. The extension officers sit in silence and leave it to the vikas adhikari to defend or explain their conduct. Even on technical matters the extension officers generally do not insist on giving proper advice to the members. They prefer to remain silent, though outside the meeting hall they may informally explain the matter to the concerned non-officials.

The coopted members, especially the representatives of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, participate very rarely in these discussions even if matters concerning them are under consideration. Usually the women coopted members sit unobtrusively and leave the hall after sitting there for an hour or so. The representatives of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes however freely mix with other members.

The minutes of panchayat samiti meetings are prepared by the vikas adhikari with the help of notes taken by one of his subordinates. Later, these notes are cyclostyled and distributed to the members. The minutes generally record the decisions taken and the points made in the meeting. Sometimes the highlights of the discussion are also noted. Generally, the pradhans do not interfere with the preparation of the minutes by the vikas adhikari. In one of the panchayat samitis however it was noted that the pradhan had instructed the vikas adhikari not to cyclostyle and distribute minutes without first securing his approval.

One of the most controversial issues at the panchayat samiti meetings is the demand for *Question- Hour*. There is no specific mention of it in the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act. Whenever the members demand for its inclusion the vikas adhikari and other officials point out that they are not obliged to give answers to questions relating to administration and the working of panchayat samiti. In two of the three panchayat samitis studied, where provision for *Question Hour* was made, the vikas adhikaris insisted on having a week's notice for answering the questions raised by the members. In most cases, they refused

to give any information In both the panchayat samitis the *Question Hour* experiment thus turned out to be a failure

Standing Committee

The standing committees are invested with wide functional responsibilities There is however no uniformity with regard to the number, numerical strength and assignment of work of the standing committees in different panchayat samitis This is because of the fact that the formation and importance of standing committee depend mainly on the personality of the chairman Generally, the standing committees are formed in such a way as to accommodate all the leading members of the pradhan's group Thus in one of the panchayat samitis which we studied there was a single standing committee for finance and administration (headed by the pradhan), while in the two other panchayat samitis there were separate standing committees for finance and administration In all the three panchayat samitis the pradhan was however the chairman of the standing committee on administration

The standing committee meetings are held as and when called by the chairman One third of the total membership constitutes the quorum of these meetings Even then the meetings were mostly adjourned for want of quorum In contrast to this none of the panchayat samiti meetings had to be adjourned for lack of quorum This can be seen from Table XIV

The table shows that an overwhelming number of standing committee meetings had to be adjourned due to lack of quorum Not only this Most members took considerable time to assemble thus delaying the conduct of the meetings and shortening their duration

The vikas adhikari generally fails to attend the standing committee meetings At times several meetings are held simultaneously The vikas adhikari therefore finds it extremely difficult to attend them What is however difficult to understand is the lack of concern which the other extension officers have for these meetings In one of the panchayat samitis the vikas adhikari had made them the secretaries of various standing committees for recording the proceedings of their meetings and providing such other technical assistance The experiment however did not

Table XIV

Standing committee	Total meetings	Meetings adjourned without quorum	Percentage of col. 3 to 2
	Panchayat Samiti : D		
Administration	40	5	12.5
Finance and Taxation	29	9	31.0
Agriculture	23	4	17.0
Education	18	7	39.0
Social Service	16	8	50.0
Cooperative	13	3	23.0
Mahila Kalyan	7	3	43.0
	Panchayat Samiti : S		
Finance & Administration	37	15	40.0
Agriculture	24	11	45.0
Education	19	15	79.0
Health	18	5	28.0
Small Industry & Cooperation	16	6	38.0
Social Welfare	19	7	39.0
	Panchayat Samiti : J		
Administration	20	4	20.0
Finance	14	3	21.0
Agriculture	10	5	50.0
Education	15	5	33.6
Industry	20	10	50.0

succeed due to indifference on the part of the officers concerned. In another panchayat samiti the opposite was the case. Here the extension officers exercised dominating influence on the deliberations and the decisions of the standing committee meetings. The opposite role played by the extension officers in the two panchayat samitis is explained by the fact that the first panchayat samiti was dominated by Swatantra-oriented (or opposition party-oriented) members who felt antagonistic to the state government officials and tried to keep them 'in their place,' while no such political gulf divided the officials and non-officials in the second panchayat samiti. If panchayati raj institutions are to succeed a happy compromise has to be reached between these two limits.

Zila Parishad

The zila parishad holds its meetings at the conference hall in the Jaipur Collectorate. The zila parishad meets round an elongated oval-shaped table with seats reserved for M.Ps, M.L.As, pradhans and government officials. The pramukh is flanked by the district development officer and the secretary of the zila parishad with his face turned towards the pradhans and vikas adhikaris who usually sit together.

The agenda of zila parishad is prepared by the pramukh. In the case of the zila parishad which we studied the district development officer and the deputy district development officer also took great interest in this work.

Starting with its inaugural meeting on 20th October, 1959, this zila parishad had held 20 meetings over a period of about 4 years; the yearly break-up of these meetings being 1, 2, 7 and 3 in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1963 respectively. The attendance at these meetings was generally high. Althrough it exceeded 60 per cent of the total membership. The pramukh was present on all occasions, so was the district development officer. The pradhans also attended the meetings quite regularly. All the 17 pradhans were present in two meetings. In six other meetings 15 to 16 of them were present. The lowest number was 10 in one of the meetings.

The M.L.As also attended fairly regularly but their record was less that of the pradhans. As far as the M.Ps are concerned, their attendance was rather low. In as many as 6 meetings no M.P. was present and in another 6 meetings only one of them was present. Among the M.Ps the one who attended the meetings

regularly was a woman. In all she attended 11 of the 17 meetings which were held during her tenure of membership.

The zila parishad meetings were generally held on time. Usually the meetings started within half-an-hour of their scheduled time. The district development officer, though regular in attendance, was however often late in attending the meetings. The attendance of government officials belonging to different departments was also unsatisfactory. In a number of cases the members complained about their indifference. The zila parishad even passed formal resolutions in two or three cases, asking the representatives of certain government departments to attend its meetings. The departments which often failed to send their representatives were the Forest, Education and Cooperation. The members also complained that the departmental representatives did not come fully prepared to deal with the cases about which the zila parishad required their advice or suggestions,

The sub-committees have also not been able to give a good account of themselves. Lack of quorum and prolonged delays are much too frequent. This can be seen from the following table.

Table XV

Sub-committee	*Meetings called*	*Meetings adjourned without quorum*	*Per cent of col. 2 to 3*
Administration & Finance	8	—	0.0
Planning	12	5	41.0
Production	5	1	20.0
Industries	5	2	40.0
Social Service & Education	15	8	53.0

From the point of view of institutional behaviour it could be safely concluded that the state of affairs is most satisfactory at the panchayat samiti level. Though the situation is not ideally perfect, the level of participation is not disappointing if one were to compare it with the situation prevailing at higher levels: Parliament and legislative assemblies. One of the reasons for the satis-

factory performance of panchayat samiti might be the power and status given to it which has enabled it to have the services of persons of better calibre This in itself is a healthy feature, particularly in view of the fact that panchayat samitis are to play an important role in the three-tier structure of panchayati raj

II

Qualitative Analysis

Panchayat

A qualitative appraisal of the behavioural pattern of panchayat shows that

1 The members of panchayat are, by and large, indifferent to its activities Even when they attend panchayat meetings they normally prefer to toe the line of sarpanch and would most often not participate at all There would hardly be an occasion when they would take any initiative in the deliberations of its meetings They are not active partners to the decision-making process

2 The utility of panchayati raj institutions is not appreciated by those below the level of sarpanch—those who may be called the panchayat incarnate This has naturally made the sarpanch a very important and powerful functionary who is tempted to misuse his position by the sheer docility of other panchayat members It is very difficult to say whether the pre-eminent position of sarpanch has contributed to the lack of initiative on the part of panchas or whether the docility of panchs has strengthened the position of sarpanch to a point which tempts him to misuse his powers Perhaps, it will be nearer the truth to say that both these factors have contributed in making the panchas inactive

3 As a corollary to this, panchayats have failed to enthuse or activise the villagers through ward panchas who themselves are inactive

4 The sarpanch has also not taken initiative, perhaps in his own self interest, to activise the panchas

The lack of interest or involvement and participation on the part of panchas should not however be taken as an argument for discrediting the panchayati raj mechanism It should be recognised that the villagers from whom the panchas come have not had the taste of self government for quite some time They had

lost self-confidence and initiative in the wake of authoritarian government which simply made them to obey and follow its directives. It would naturally take time for them to become active partners in rural self-government and rural development which are the twin objectives of panchayati raj.

If the panchas are assigned some specific responsibilities on the model of portfolio system earlier seggested, it will be a significant step in the direction of activising them. Their activisation has however to be accepted as a slow and a long-drawn process.

Panchayat Samiti

The performance of sarpanchas has been far better than that of panchas. Within the confines of this general observation, the following points may be made.

1. The extent of participation in the panchayat samiti also does not go beyond a few sarpanchas who are more vociferous than others. Normally, either the close associates of pradhan with a gift of the gab or the more prominent members the opposition group dominate the floor of the samiti. Most members of panchayat samiti however remain passive receivers of information, toeing the line of action that is suggested to them by the pradhan or the block development officer. It may be noted however that whenever the sarpanchas participate, they bring to bear local orientation on their observations, spotlighting thereby the problems and difficulties of their areas. They thus serve as true representatives of their respective areas and hence fulfil one of the important objectives of panchayati raj, namely spotlighting the needs and problems of the local people. It is true that most often they do not make any suggestion. But when they do the suggestion carries sense.[26]

2. Most panchayat samitis have been monopolised by the pradhan or the block development officer (depending on their personality) or by both. Little effort has been made by them to encourage participation of other members.

26. An incident may be cited in this regard. The block development officer in one of the panchayat samitis had got from the district headquarters a beautiful tin box for collecting small savings. He wanted the sarpanchas to commit themselves about the number of boxes that they would be able to circulate in their respective panchayats. The pradhan was also toeing this line. Some of the sarpanchas however felt that they could not commit themselves without consulting the panchas who were to shoulder the task. After a good deal of discussion, the suggestion of sarpanchas was accepted. There are many such examples.

3. The meetings of panchayat samiti are orderly held. The customary parliamentary decorum is generally taken for granted.

4. The extension officers have not proved to be good salesmen of their ideas. They generally talk in an idiom (which follows from the mixed English and Hindi medium model) which is beyond the comprehension of panchayat samiti members. Their ideas would find a better acceptance if only they could talk in local dialect.

5. This also holds true for the district level officers who attend (of course irregularly as pointed out earlier) the meetings of panchayat samiti. They also fail to communicate their ideas to the members of panchayat samiti and therefore their presence in the panchayat samiti meetings is not of much importance, except in so far as they are in a position to throw light on the difficulties of meeting a particular demand of the sarpanchas.

6. Sometimes the district development officer or his deputy also attends the meetings of panchayat samiti. His presence in the meetings adds to the interest and enthusiasm of the members. The impact that he creates usually emanates from his involvement and interest in community development and panchayati raj. It also depends on his attitude towards villagers and their problems in general as well as his capacity to communicate himself to the villagers.[27]

It is very difficult, again, to suggest any means of improving the behaviour pattern of panchayat samiti in terms of better participation by members or better performance by officials. This, again, has to be accepted as part of a process which will find its

27. It may be pointed out in this connection that one of the district development [illegible] in contact during our period of enquiry, [illegible] the sarpanchas knew that he [illegible] *oblems and difficulties.* What [illegible] n, was his sympathetic out- [illegible] r problems and, [illegible] ecame necessary. [illegible] their level and [illegible] [illegible] ut panchayati raj, [illegible] *stitutions on right* lines.

own way. Still the following suggestions may be useful, though it is difficult to provide for them statutorily.

1. The block development officer and pradhan should try to elicit maximum participation of sarpanchas. A convention may be developed that ordinary members of standing committees should always be asked to participate in the deliberations his committee.

2. The officials, particularly the extension officers, should try to learn the local dialect (at any rate simple Hindi) so that language may not be a barrier between them and the panchayat samiti members.

3. The training imparted to the officials should emphasize the importance of identification with the programme, and their imbibing what is commonly know as 'development orientation.' To further encourage this, 'development orientation' should be treated as one of the grounds for their further promotion in their service career. It may be pointed out in this connection that the Rajasthan Government has been alive to these aspects. They have a provision for promotion of a certain number of extension offices to R.A.S. on the basis of their interest and performance in panchayati raj institutions. A complaint is however often made that political influences account more in the promotion of this type than the performance an official. This tendency (if it at all exists) has to be discouraged because performance as an incentive would lose its meaning if it were to be subordinated to political considerations.

As the panchayat samiti meetings are held quarterly, the committees have become, functionally speaking, extremely important. It is true that panchayat samiti can revoke decisions made by a committee but actually this seldom happens.

All the standing committees do not command equal prestige. What gives prestige to a standing committee is the power enjoyed by it and perhaps, more than that, the patronage that it can distribute. It is for this reason that the committees dealing with finance, administration and agriculture are among the coveted ones. It should not be surprising, therefore, if a pradhan is normally the chairman of the committee dealing with finance or administration or both.

The business transacted in the different standing committees is different. The standing committees dealing with administration,

finance and taxation generally deal with routine matters of hearing appeals, preparing the budget and discussing the tax proposals. Though each activity theoretically sounds very impressive, in practice it is not so. For example, budget making at the panchayat samiti level is a routine compilation of various departmental funds and tax proposals which seldom pass beyond the discussion stage. The panchayati raj non-officials are averse to increasing taxation whether in the standing committees or in the panchayat samitis. The only regular job for the standing committee on administration is to hear appeals against the decisions of panchayats. This takes up most of the time of the standing committee and gives it a dominant position. The standing committee dealing with administration also exercises minor disciplinary powers on the panchayat samiti employees and approves the appointment of panchayat secretaries upon the recommendations forwarded by the sarpanchas. The standing committees dealing with production programmes in the fields of agriculture, cooperation, animal husbandry, education and industries, etc. are concerned mainly with formulation of local details regarding the general schemes sent to the panchayat samiti by the departments concerned and determining the actual manner of distribution of grants and loans to individuals and institutions in this connection. These standing committees also take decisions which have certain financial implications but which fall in their jurisdiction. The standing committees dealing with social services also broadly have similar duties and decisions but in their case the funds are rather limited and the criteria for their distribution are generally spelled out in detail and in advance. The foregoing general analysis can be illustrated with reference to the typical agenda of four standing committees.

Agenda of a Standing Committee on Administration

1. Hearing of appeals.
2. Extension of the services of panchayat samiti overseer.
3. Approval of the appointments of panchayat secretaries.
4. Appointment of an upper division clerk.

Agenda of a Standing Committee on Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

1. Discussion regarding utilisation of government land handed over to the panchayats.

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4. Appointment of an upper division clerk.

Agenda of a Standing Committee on Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

1. Discussion regarding utilisation of government land handed over to the panchayats.

2. Consideration of the budget of panchayat samiti nursery.
3. Decision regarding sanction of taccavi loans.
4. Discussion on applications regarding payment of taccavi dues in instalments.
5. Discussion regarding the ways and means of raising funds for the purchase of bulls for stock-breeding.
6. Permission for purchase of medicines, furniture, etc.
7. Grants-in-aid for purchase of bulls.
8. Approval of the accounts for purchase of poultry.
9. Location of 'intensive area scheme' for animal husbandry.

Agenda of a Standing Committee on Finance and Taxation

1. Consideration of the proposals forwarded by the standing committee on animal husbandry.
2. Consideration of the financial proposals of the standing committee on cooperation and cottage industries.
3. Approval of contract for bones.
4. Approval of the bills for petroleum.
5. Decision regarding payment of bills for gram kaki camps.

Agenda of a Standing Committee on Education, Communications and Social Welfare

1. Decisions regarding location of new schools.
2. Disposal of old material in schools.
3. Award of scholarships to scheduled tribe and scheduled caste students.
4. Consideration of the proposal for study tour of panchayat samiti members.
5. Appointment of gram kakis.
6. Grants-in-aid for adult literacy.
7. District level gram kaki training camp.
8. Grants-in-aid to navyuvak mandals.
9. Deputation of a representative to the district vikas samiti.

The standing committee meetings are held in an informal at-

mosphere. This does not mean, however, that there is free and friendly discussion of the issues involved. The standing committee on the contrary rarely discusses any issue. All the members generally endorse the decisions already taken by the pradhan or the chairman outside the meeting. This tendency was very much in evidence in one of the panchayat samitis where the standing committees degenerated into an informal meeting of the pradhan and his relatives and supporters who often met outside the panchayat samiti premises, at a private meeting place. This informal assembly of persons would first decide all the issues which were to be placed before the standing committee which would only put its official seal on the decisions already taken. Thus, though the importance of standing committees has been greatly enhanced by the provision of quarterly panchayat samiti meetings, they continue to function as subordinate units, toeing the demands of the dominating group. Under the pradhan's shadow their initiative is sapped and they have very little scope for independent creative work. In fact, the standing committee meetings are called merely in order to fulfil a routine formality.

What is worse is that the reports of these committees are not taken very seriously by the panchayat samiti. This can be seen from the fact that such reports are not placed before the panchayat samiti regularly but a file of reports is placed before it and that too after long intervals. The panchayat samiti members have little time to go through the reports and confirm them.

The standing committees at the panchayat samiti level thus serve, more or less, as pockets of the pradhan's group. Their impact on the panchayati raj programme is therefore hardly tangible. This is all the more regrettable because these committees have a rich potential area of activity. This is highlighted by the achievements of the standing committee on health in one of the panchayat samitis under our study. It is worthwhile to quote what our research officer has to say in this regard.

> While the standing committee on finance and administration enjoyed an important status as an overall control mechanism, the standing committee on health emerges as the most active on account of its able and enthusiastic chairman who took great pains to popularise health and sanitation measures in the panchayat samiti area. The standing committee called in all 18 meetings out of which only 5 had to be postponed for want of

quorum. The standing committee drew up several excellent programmes of health and sanitation and was able to get them implemented in an enthusiastic manner.

The fact that the committees are just a pocket borough for the pradhan leads to the committee's working almost exclusively on partisan lines —distributing benefits to only the members of the pradhan's group. The situation worsens because the vikas adhikaris most often do not attend the meetings of the standing committees. Thus a moral check on the partisan activities of the committees is withdrawn. If any of the extension officers attend the meetings of standing committees, he does not have the courage to differ with the pradhan or the members of the dominating group.

Qualitatively speaking, the working of the standing committees is thus rather discouraging. The following steps may be taken to improve the situation.

1. As already suggested, the standing committee should be constituted on the basis of proportional representation so that it may not be exclusively monopolised by the members of the dominating group.

2. The vikas adhikari should try to attend as many meetings of the standing committee as he possibly could. His presence would have a moral influence on the proceedings of the committees which may not follow an entirely partisan course in the teeth of a well-meant resistance on his part. For this it is essential that the committees do not meet simultaneously.

3. Besides the vikas adhikari, it may be profitable to place an extension officer to serve on the standing committee as its secretary in *ex-officio* capacity. His placement may be made keeping in view his subject, expertise and the functions assigned to a committee. If the two are thus made to coincide, as far as possible, the expertise of the extension officer will be available for use to the members of the committee. This would in turn improve the quality of their decisions. The experience so far indicates that the extension officers play an effective role when the vikas adhikari is there to serve as a buffer between them and an over-awing pradhan.

Zila Parishad

As far as the qualitative aspects of the behaviour of zila

parishad members is concerned, the following observations may be made.

1. The meetings of the Jaipur Zila Parishad had been dominated by one of the three district development officers with whom we came into contact during our period of enquiry. As a result of this, the initiative of the pramukh, district level officers, vikas adhikaris and even some pradhans was somewhat limited. But perhaps more good than harm resulted from this dominance. It was a dominance born of earnestness of purpose to make panchayati raj a success. The members of the zila parishad were in fact infected by the transparent sincerity of purpose of the district development officer and as such did not resent his monopolising the floor and accepted him as a sincere path finder. He could thus succeed in setting a tone, not merely to the deliberations of the zila parishad, but also to some extent to the panchayati raj movement in the district as a whole. The two successors of the district development officer under reference appear to have passed a self-denying ordinance as far as participation in the zila parishad meetings is concerned. The deputy development officer played as substitute fairly creditably during the time of these two district development officers. It may be observed here that neither the monopoly of discussion (howsoever earnest and well meaning it may be as in case of one of the three district development officers) nor their complete indifference (as in the case of the other two succeeding district development officers) is in the interest of the panchayati raj institutions. A way has to be found out between these two attitudes. In fact, if a district development officer were to err on either side, it is perferable to err on the side of being over-zealous in offering guidance than being apathetic in the present transitional stage of panchayati raj when the interest shown by the district development officer goes a long way in setting the tone of the panchayati raj institutions.

2. The pramukh has been playing the role of a chairman with balance and discretion. He appears to have been keen on working institutionally without aggrandising his authority. Besides giving his ruling and guidance, he has not tried to monopolise the platform but has allowed the discussion to flow as freely as possible. He himself has been a man of few

officials *versus* non-officials reaches a stage of equilibrium. If the pramukh takes initiative to see that the district level officers are also advised informally by their superiors to make better efforts at adjustment, the initial uneasiness between these two equally important functionaries will be removed much earlier than expected.

Zila Parishad Committees

The behaviour of the committees at the zila parishad level is determined by the role assigned to them which in turn is determined by the role of the zila parishad itself. As the zila parishad is an advisory and coordinating body at the district level, the committees of the zila parishad have to share this broad role in their respective fields. Whatever they do is more of an advisory and supervisory character than policy formulation and programme implementation. It is no wonder therefore if the members of the committees do not evince much interest in the proceedings, more so, because they are hastily called without enough preparation and most of the members who have to travel long distances find it difficult to reach in time, particularly at a short notice. Still whenever they sit to work, they have seriousness of purpose and business is transacted in a sober and, most often, in a non-partisan way. The district development officer or the deputy district development officer, or in some cases a district level officer,[28] serves as a guide and path finder to the committees which have invariably benefited by their presence. They help in the efforts which are made to take an overall view of the district in the deliberations of the committees which very often succeeds because the members have an attitude of mutual understanding and cooperation. Since the gathering is small, the officials participate freely in the discussion and put forward their opinions boldly. Each item on the agenda is picked up for detailed discussion. The final decision is arrived at through consensus rather than voting.

It is difficult to say whether the members have some preference for particular sub-committees at the zila parishad level as they have at the panchayat samiti level. The classification of the 5 sub-committees given below hardly serves as a reliable indicator in this regard.

28. This role which is very rare offers a happy contrast to the role of district level officers in the meeting of zila parishad.

Table XVI

(in number)

Category of membership	*Total*	*Adminis-tration & finance*	*Plann-ing & evaluation*	*Produc-tion*	*Indus-tries*	*Social service & education*
Pramukh	1	1	—	—	—	—
M P	7	1	2	—	3	1
M L A	17	2	4	7	2	2
Pradhan	17	3	4	2	3	5
Coopted	1	1	—	—	—	—
Total	43	8	10	9	8	8

As the table shows the pramukh is a member of only one sub-committee (administration and finance) and no member is placed in more than one sub-committee However, the pramukh can attend the meetings of any sub-committee as a member The distribution of members into different sub committees does not have any other distinct feature except that as many as 7 M L As (out of a total of 17) are included in a single sub committee (production) and 5 pradhans in social service and education sub-committees To some extent this reflects the 'social welfare' bias of panchati raj which leaves out a large number of pradhans from the agricultural production sub-committee Since most of the pradhans in the zila parishad are active and progressive farmers, it would surely have been better if most of them were associated with the production sub-committee which is now dominated by M L As most of whom are non-agriculturists

Each sub-committee works under a chairman who presides over its meetings, conducts the proceedings, records the minutes and presents the reports to the zila parishad The chairmen of sub-committees in the zila parishad which we studied included those listed in the following table.

Table XVIII

Sub-Committee	*Chairman*
Administration and Finance	Pramukh
Planning and Evaluation	M.P.
Production	M.L.A.
Industries	Pradhan
Secial Service and Education	M.P.

The general procedure in the case of zila parishad has been to call the sub-committee meetings only a few days before its general meeting. The reports of the sub-committees are presented to such meetings. There is also no fixed calendar for calling the meetings of the sub-committee and this causes considerable difficulty. These hastily convened meetings do not prove as useful as they should be because in many cases the proceedings and reports of the sub-committee meetings cannot be placed before the zila parishad, since no time is available for finalising the reports and getting them cyclostyled. It has been one of the regular complaints of the members of zila parishad that copies of the sub-committee reports were never circulated to them in advance. As yet no steps have been taken to remove this difficulty.

The sub-committee meetings are generally called at the initiative of the chairman and as a result there is no regularity in the timing of these meetings. The situation may improve if a regular calendar schedule is agreed upon or if the responsibility for calling the meetings of sub-committees is placed on the secretary of the zila parishad.

V

Panchayati Raj and Development Planning

THE functional achievements of panchayati raj institutions can be best studied by grouping them into two separate but inter-dependent wings officials and non-officials The non-officials are the elected or coopted representatives of the people Their role in panchayati raj institutions has therefore to be somewhat different from the role of officials who constitute a permanent cadre The non-officials can only provide general guidance from the stand-point of the people and maintain overall supervision over the working of panchayati raj institutions The officials on the other hand have to work out the details and enthuse and guide the people to implement the schemes according to the decisions taken in the general meeting of the subordinate units of these institutions

The non-officials and officials however work in different spheres of 'decision making and 'policy implementation', though their role and activities are inter dependent particularly because in reality both are associated more with implementation than with 'decision making' The officials have to play a significant role in guiding the non officials especially on technical and specialised matters with a view to help them take right decisions in the broader context of national plans and local needs The non-officials in panchayati raj institutions are men of sound common sense and local knowledge But their wisdom has to be supplemented by expert advice based on specialised knowledge which trained officials alone can supply The non-officials have to act as

pathfinders. The officials even with their special training and experties cannot make much headway against age-old practices and psychological resistance of the people to modernisation.

The Functional Span

The functional achievements of the panchayati raj institutions can be judged on three criteria.

1. The nature of decisions taken in tackling different issues, especially those relating to planning from below.
2. The extent to which decisions are implemented.
3. The steps taken when the decisions are not implemented.

All this has to be viewed in the context of the 'decision making' powers delegated to the panchayati raj institutions and the field of 'decision making' set apart for them. The general guidelines relating to these aspects are provided in the Third Schedule of the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953 (section 23-27) for panchayats; the Schedule under section 23 of the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, for panchayat samitis; and in section 56 of the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, for zila parishads. These are given in the appendix.

A comparison of the functional schedule of panchayat and panchayat samiti reveals that the area under their common jurisdiction is quite large. Panchayat samitis are however entrusted with such activities as are directly related to economic development, while panchayats are responsible for activities which are primarily of routine nature. This can be seen from Table XVIII.

Animal husbandry, cooperation, rural housing and community development which appear as major functional heads in the case of panchayat samiti are not to be found in the list of panchayat functions; while public works, self-defence and panchayat circle defence which constitute the principal heads in the Panchayat Schedule do not occur as such in the Panchayat Samiti Schedule. Taken as a whole, the Panchayat Schedule clearly suffers from an absence of developmental orientation. The Panchayat Samiti Schedule on the other hand is just an enumeration of the various activities of the community development programme.

Zila parishad is a case by itself. Its prescribed functions

Table XVIII

Panchayat Schedule	*Panchayat Samiti Schedule*
Sanitation and Health	Community Development
Public Works	Agriculture
Education and Culture	Animal Husbandry
Self defence and Panchayat	Health and Rural Sanitation
Circle Defence	Education
Administration	Social Education
Welfare of the people	Communications
Agriculture	Cooperation
Breeding and Protecting	Cottage Industries
Cattle	Work amongst backward classes
Village Industries	Emergency Relief and Trusts
Miscellaneous	Collection of statistics
	Forests, Publicity,
	Rural Housing,
	Miscellaneous

reveal that by nature it is to be an advisory cum supervisory body Its functions can be divided into three categories as listed below

Table XIX

Category	*Functions**
Supervisory	1, 9, 14
Coordinative	2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 15
Advisory	11, 12, 13, 16, 17

* As listed in section 56 of the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959

To sum up, the panchayati raj institutions are expected to undertake a wide variety of functions, ranging from rural development to rural administration. They have to carry on the institutional responsibilities which were formerly vested in district boards and panchayats on the one hand and the community development block administration on the other.

Planning from Below

Among the many attempts made to integrate the panchayati raj institutions into the stream of economic development, the idea of *planning from below* was seriously taken up at the highest level in Rajasthan. The panchayati raj institutions were assigned a pivotal role in the process of *planning from below.* Unfortunately, however, the panchayati raj institutions, which were inaugurated as recently as October 2, 1959, were preoccupied with minor organisational details and could not fully cope with the challenging demands of local planning which the scheme of *planning from below* brought to the fore. Moreover, by their very nature, panchayati raj institutions were dependent on grants-in-aid. The specific details of these were not communicated to them in time. Though the Chief Secretary and the Development Department took keen interest in the scheme and circulated a number of letters and circulars giving guidance on the role of the panchayati raj institutions in *planning from below,* the lack of information regarding the quantum of funds available made it difficult to have a realistic planning at the local level particularly because the idea of planning was itself novel.

The Development Department circulated general proformas on which the panchayats and panchayat samitis were expected to prepare their plans. These were then to be consolidated at the zila parishad level. The response from the panchayats was however negligible and from the panchayat samitis still more unsatisfactory. Even at the zila parishad level, where some sort of a district plan could be prepared, the non-officials were not as enthusiastic as the officials, especially the district development officer and his deputy who was then the secretary of the Jaipur Zila Parishad. These two officials really put their heart into the scheme and visited the panchayat samitis, explaining the utility as well as the necessity of *planning from below.* The pramukh also took considerable interest. He visited the panchayat samitis and explained

to them the importance of the scheme. He even supervised the work at the zila parishad level.

Despite all this enthusiasm and interest *planning from below* failed to come up to the expectation. This was mainly because of the extremely limited time which was devoted to an altogether new type of activity. Though with the help of the proformas and the instructions given by the Development Department the panchayat samitis were able to draw up a plan and forward it to the zila parishad, the final document remained by and large an official 'baby'. The non-officials could not be said to have contributed towards its shaping. This is further borne out by the following perusal of the operation of the scheme of *planning form below* at different levels of panchayati raj.

Panchayat plans: The time available to panchayats for preparation of their area plans was so little that most panchayats could not even fill up the proformas supplied to them. Whatever plans were prepared were hurriedly put together at the panchayat samiti level.

Panchayat samiti plans : All the three panchayat samitis prepared their five year plans on an area basis, but not with any interest. In one of the panchayat samitis the members clearly stated that *planning from below* was only a formality; the plan document being based on 'desk assumptions' and not on actual survey of local needs. In fact, the members dragged into the discussion irrelevant issues which soon degenerated into a brawl between opposing groups. The minutes of the panchayat samiti under reference recorded the following proceedings.

> The pradhan explained the importance of five year plans and emphasized that the members must take interest in *planning from below*. They should collect necessary information and prepare the plans and submit them on time. Many members, however, objected that all this involves unnecessary wastage of time and only yesterday they had listened to a sermon on the same topic from the Collector. One of the coopted members however supported the pradhan and pointed out that the matter was worth reiteration. At this moment one member stood up and without the permission of the pradhan began to shout that he would not listen to anything in this connection. The up-pradhan and five other sarpanchas supported him. The pradhan pointed out that these members were creating

disturbance and were speaking without seeking the Chair's permission. They furiously protested and one of them sharply asked the pradhan to sit down. The pradhan ordered the member to sit down and asked him not to behave in such an ill-mannered way. The situation became very tense and the meeting began to hum with loud bustling noise. One of the sarpanchas quipped that when the draft outline of the Third Five Year Plan would be out the pradhan's name would appear on the front page. At this stage the pradhan adjourned the meeting for half-an-hour. When the meeting was resumed, the vikas adhikari requested the members to maintain peaceful atmosphere and asked them to submit the survey forms to the office; the draft were to be prepared after consolidating them. The members agreed to this proposal.

The next meeting of the panchayat samiti was specially called for discussing the schemes of *planning from below* relating to the Third Five Year Plan. It was attended by the pramukh, the district development officer and a number of district level officers belonging to agriculture, animal husbandry, education, cooperation, etc. The tone of this meeting was set by the pramukh who informed the members that a sum of Rs. 15 lakhs would be transferred to the panchayat samiti and that it would have to collect only Rs. 5.50 lakhs for the Third Plan. After the pramukh the district level officers spoke one after another and each explained the various departmental schemes and indicated the total departmental resources to be transferred to the panchayat samiti. After this the pradhan invited comments from the members who mainly spoke about the need for additional funds. Thus the member's temper cooled down and the panchayat samiti plan was prepared. The vikas adhikari in the next meeting informed the members that the draft was submitted to the zila parishad.

The panchayat samiti plan was however so unrealistic that it was returned to it with a note by the Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan, that it needed thorough revision and alteration. The estimates of funds made in the panchayat samiti plan were far more than that planned for the entire State. The panchayat samiti thereupon completely shelved its plan and it was never again referred at any stage. It was filed and completely forgotten.

In the two other panchayat samitis the preparation of five

year plan did not lead to such political or personal bickerings However, even in their case, the entire initiative rested with the officials who filled the proformas and sent the drafts to the zila parishad

The panchayat samiti five year plans cannot however be regarded as plan documents except in a very formal sense, as they do not present any economic analysis of resources and expenditure but mainly contain some physical programmes and targets and some tentative estimates about the funds available for these schemes Some of the basic information contained in these documents is also unreliable

In actual practice, the entire exercise of *planning from below* has thus turned out to be a fruitless attempt None of the officials or non-officials regard these plans as guidelines for future action. The panchayat samiti plans are formulated and then filed In the day-to day working of panchayat samiti or in its annual or quarterly programmes, no reference is ever made to the plan provisions Detailed evaluation of schematic targets is also never done

Zila parishad plans As already stated, the zila parishad showed a keen interest in *planning from below* and managed to prepare a district plan However, once it was prepared and submitted, it was also forgotten No reference was ever made to this document in any meeting of the zila parishad or its sub-committees

The officials and non-officials of zila parishad admitted that the schemes of *planning from below* failed to yield good results mainly because the departmental allocations were made known to them at a late stage and due to frequent changes in the funds proposed to be made available To some extent this justifies the unreliability of the plan documents but does not explain the total indifference with which these were treated by the Rajasthan Government and the officials and non-officials at all levels of panchayati raj

To put it briefly, *planning from below* has at best resulted in having the ritual of people's participation in the planning process without even focussing attention on local needs, problems and resources which is the very core of the idea of *planning from below*

Apart from the quinquennial exercise in *planning from below*, an effort is also made by the departments and the zila parishad to prepare short term plans The government departments, especially the Development Department, play a crucial role in determining the annual operational schemes of panchayats and panchayat samitis

by making available the needed resources and personnel. The various government departments communicate to panchayats and panchayat samitis the likely availability of funds and ask the panchayat samitis to determine and chalk out the schemes and fix schematic targets. Once these are prepared the relevant papers are sent to the concerned government departments for technical approval. After the schemes are scrutinised they are passed on to the concerned extension officer for execution.

Departmental Schemes

Most of the schemes executed in the three panchayat samitis which we studied were 'suggested' or 'sponsored' schemes of the government departments. The latter also provided the funds for the implementation of these schemes. The departments, in other words, drew up the general details of a scheme and sent circulars to various panchayat samitis for its execution. Generally, none of the schemes could be executed at the block level without the association of panchayats. In such cases the circulars and letters received from various departments were read out in panchayat samiti meetings and the sarpanchas were asked to suggest suitable sites for their implementation.

The role of panchayat samiti in regard to departmental schemes has therefore boiled down to selection of panchayats or determination of their area of implementation. All the schemes however did not evoke similar response. For certain types of schemes no panchayat came forward, while for others there were too many claimants. In the latter case, selection was made mainly on political or personal grounds.

Having selected the location for the execution of a departmental scheme, the panchayat samitis left it to the official wing to carry it out according to the instructions of the department concerned. The only other way in which panchayat samitis exercised any control over the schemes was to review their progress. Even this was done either at the initiative of the department which informed the panchayat samiti that a particular scheme was not making much headway or at the initiative of some sarpanchas who complained about the implementation of such schemes.

At the district level, zila parishad plays a similar role; the only difference being that it receives lesser number of letters and circulars requesting it to suggest suitable location for various

schemes This is mainly because most of the district schemes have not been transferred to the panchayati raj institutions The departments still continue to be responsible for them

It is against this background of Panchayati raj institutions being the agents for the implementation of official schemes that the operation of the transferred schemes has to be viewed and accordingly the major problem areas delineated The discussion which follows provides such an account through an examination of the operation of each important or major scheme of development

Agriculture The panchayati raj institutions are expected to promote agricultural development in every respect For this purpose an agricultural extension officer is posted in each panchayat samiti He is assisted by gram sevaks who are expected to devote their entire time to agriculture

Most of the schemes relating to agriculture are formulated by the Agriculture Department of the Rajasthan Government and are passed on to panchayat samitis for execution with the help of panchayats Among the schemes transferred are demonstration and distribution of various types of implements, fertilisers, manures, appliances, seeds, and disbursement of various types of agricultural loans and grants for specified purposes such as purchase of bulls, construction and repair of wells, etc

Seed distribution In all the three panchayat samitis the programme relating to purchase and distribution of seeds has created serious problems The Agriculture Department recommends the seeds which are to be purchased by each panchayat samiti and also specifies the vendor and the price The panchayat samiti is only empowered to make suitable changes

Prior to the inauguration of panchayati raj institutions, the Agriculture Department used to distribute seeds in large quantity on credit However, due to difficulties in the recovery of such loans, the Department evolved a system by which the seeds had to be returned in kind This was also intended to secure seeds of improved variety which the Department could make available for further distribution It was envisaged that the scheme would lead to increasing application of improved seeds in place of inferior variety of seeds

The Agriculture Department issued personal summons against sarpanchas and pradhans for the recovery of seed loans This

touched off a wave of resentment and anger. In a meeting of zila parishad the infuriated pradhans pointed out that the move was entirely unjustified. While they were ready to shoulder the responsibility for the distribution of seeds made after the inauguration of panchayati raj, they maintained that they could not be held responsible for the recovery of seed loans extended by the Agriculture Department before 2nd October, 1959, that is, prior to the introduction of panchayati raj. Moreover, they pointed out that the practice of obtaining attachment of the property of sarpanchas and pradhans was highly irregular as they recommended extension of loan in their institutional capacity and not in their personal capacity.

Apart from the problem of recovery, the work of distribution of seeds has been handled most unsatisfactorily. In all the three panchayat samitis there were allegations against the sarpanchas and the pradhans that the improved variety of seeds were distributed only to the members of their group who, at the time of recovery, returned seeds of inferior quality thus resulting in financial loss to panchayat samiti. These allegations are regularly made in panchayat samiti meetings without any concrete proof or evidence.

Some of the problems experienced and faced in the management and distribution of seeds, as observed by one of our research officers, are noted below:

1. Seed distribution has led to regular financial loss to panchayat samiti. Seed is generally purchased from outside the panchayat samiti area. For example, wheat was purchased from Ganganagar district of Rajasthan or from government farms at high rates plus transportation charges. It was distributed as loan to be returned in kind and not in cash. This has always been the decision of panchayat samiti. The seed which is recovered is always of third rate quality. Hence, the panchayat samiti has no alternative except to reject the seed for distribution and auction it at a miserably low rate.

2. Complaints of various nature are reported against the panchayats and the sarpanchas who deal with distribution and recovery of seeds. In the distribution of seeds group factions and their supporters are favoured. Often, improved seed is replaced by low quality seed by the sarpanch or those incharge of seed distribution and recovery at the panchayat level.

3 Recovery of seed in kind or cash is generally unsatisfactory Outstanding loans of this nature are steadily increasing, thus blocking sizeable finds of panchayat samiti

Fertiliser distribution Considerable emphasis has been placed on maximising the use of fertilisers Panchayat samitis generally fix targets for this purpose Despite their best efforts, consumption of fertilisers has however remained low To overcome the resistance of farmers, two panchayat samitis even made it obligatory for those purchasing cement or seeds to purchase some quantity of fertilisers also The major shortcomings which we noted in all the three panchayat samitis in this regard are two unwillingness on the part of panchayats to bear transportation costs, and lack of proper arrangement for storage of fertiliser The recovery of fertiliser loans is also very difficult

The none too encouraging experience of fertiliser distribution in one of the panchayat samitis under study may be recorded in detail

1 Fertilisers distributed in 1961-62 and 1962-63 were far below the targets fixed in the yearly *panch sarpanch sammelan* and confirmed in the general meeting of panchayat samiti (The targets for these years were roughly 2000 maunds per year)

2 In the absence of any demand for fertilizers from panchayats, cooperatives and cultivators, the panchayat samiti resorted to compulsory distribution Though there was no alternative, the very purpose of building up a spontaneous response was defeated

3 In spite of this the panchayats generally failed to distribute fertiliser to the cultivators The stock was also not properly stored The bags were roughly handled and kept as if they were unwanted property

4 The accounting of fertilisers wasted at the panchayat level also led to many problems The question here was who would bear the loss of such wastage? The recovery of fertiliser loans was equally difficult

5 There has been yearly accumulation of undistributed quota of fertiliser The panchayat samiti members fearing that this might go waste even asked the officials to return such stocks to the Agriculture Department

Construction of wells: Construction of wells and repair of old wells can enormously add to the irrigation resources of the village. Panchayat samitis are expected to take up these schemes. For this purpose cement is made available to them by the Collector. The quota for such stocks is also issued by him. The zila parishad only gives its advice. Once the cement quota for each panchayat samiti is fixed, it has to be taken from authorised dealers and distributed to panchayats and cultivators. Distribution is made on the basis of applications forwarded by the panchayats. However, the quota is so small that each applicant gets only 10 to 20 bags which are not sufficient for construction of a new well. The cement so distributed was also reported to have been utilised either for purposes other than that for which taken or sold in the black market. This naturally affects the realisation of targets. Our elaborate probe shows that either the targets were fixed without proper realisation of the needs, resources and chances of their accomplishment or the efforts of panchayat samiti officials were discouragingly low.

Medh-bundi and plant protection: Both panchayat and panchayat samiti are expected to emphasize the utility of *medh-bundi* for which regular drives are arranged. Similarly, plant protection schemes are sought to be popularised by demonstrations and distribution of implements. Panchayat samiti has also to arrange for weeding, spraying, etc.

As far as *medh-bundi* is concerned, it is generally confused with with *dol-bundi,* that is, erection of field boundaries. The statistics are therefore inflated. In spite of this, panchayat samitis cannot boast of an impressive record in terms of fulfilment of targets in this sphere. Most of the progress recorded was not substantiated by our field observations.

As far as plant protection schemes are concerned, the panchayat samitis generally did very little to fulfil their obligations. Most of the schemes were in paper and the targets generally underfulfilled. The experience of one of the panchayat samitis, reproduced below, is significant.

1. Progress shown has largely been the outcome of free demonstrations conducted by the panchayat samiti. Though plant protection chemicals and powders were made available for sale, the cultivators were generally not ready to pay any price for such measures. There was however increasing sale

of zink phosphate for rat control

2 In 1961 62 the panchayat samiti decided to charge the cost of 2 4D from the receipient farmers Spraying was also arranged The area covered under 2 4D weeding belonged mostly to a few sarpanchas and pradhans These sarpanchas later moved a proposal in the panchayat samiti for exemption of weeding charges The proposal was accepted and the previous decision was revoked To meet the cost of 2 4D used for weeding a sum of Rs 1 000 was also sanctioned The amount was to be paid from panchayat samiti s owned funds

3 The panchayat samiti also distributed dusters and sprayers (plant protection implements) to the panchayats Half the cost of thes implements was recovered from the panchayats But the panchayats never cared to use these dusters or sprayers except for keeping them in the store No use was made except when these were collected by the locust control parties in July September, 1962

Improved agriculture implements Distribution of improved agricultural implements is also an important part of agricultural schemes but the matter seldom receives due attention in panchayat samiti meetings In one of the panchayat samitis under study improved type of plough made available for distribution was found to be unsuitable for local use In this panchayat samiti and in its neighbouring areas the 'left-handed ploughs were in use But the newly made available ploughs were right handed and the local farmers found it difficult to use them as their bullocks were not accustomed to such ploughs As a result, the cultivators refused to make use of the new ploughs which remained in the panchayat samiti for a long time during which period some of the ploughs were even damaged However the panchayat samiti did not make any effort to get these ploughs replaced by those in use and also did not take timely steps to return them to the department concerned

Fruit plantation schemes The operation of fruit plantation schemes has been no better The points which deserve careful consideration are stated below

1 Fruit plants were sold through the panchayats on a cash basis On the spot cash sales were however negligible It was argued by the panchayats that since most of the plants did not grow it was difficult for them to recover the dues from

the cultivators. The matter has been pending for a long time. The panchayats have asked for writing off these dues.

2. The fruit plant drive was strongly criticised by the members in the panchayat samiti meetings. They demanded explanation for the failure of these plants to grow. They also urged for the collection of statistics showing the results of this drive. The replies of the officials which did not satisfy the members were :

a) that it could not be said that all plants would survive and grow;

b) that salty soil and defective sub-soil water marred the growth of these plants; and

c) that satisfactory survival of plants could be expected only if they were cultivated with utmost care.

3. Due to these reasons popular enthusiasm for the programme greatly diminished. Another factor which affected the programme was the preoccupation of the officials in locust operations at a time when the fruit plant drive could have been successfully conducted.

Taking an overall view of the various agricultural schemes, it is clear that the panchayati raj institutions have not been able to come to grips with some of the administrative bottlenecks on the one hand, and resistance on the part of the cultivators on the other. The agricultural schemes depend so much on loan financing that it is very difficult for a popular organisation like a panchayat or a panchayat samiti to affect total recovery. On the other hand there are schemes like plant protection and *medh-bundi* which do not attract the attention of the people. The panchayati raj institutions, in fact, do not have enough resources for popularising these schemes.

At present these institutions are being used mainly as distribution centres and this introduces a good deal of politics. The extension of loans and grants involves many claimants among whom only a few can be satisfied. Naturally, the pradhan and the dominating group share a large part of the benifits. The non-officials often behave in a partisan way while the officials even when they are aware of the irregularities prefer to remain silent.

The members of panchayat samiti are more interested in securing their own gains than providing local know-how and guidance to the officials for the promotion and development of agriculture.

The village level worker, for example, does not receive much cooperation from the panchayats and has to work on his own. The agricultural extension officer at times is able to command some respect and, in some cases, can even inspire confidence and cooperation. But his role as a specialist on agricultural problems seldom comes into play. The contents as well as the timing of most agricultural schemes are dictated from above. Supplies are made available on an uneven schedule and agricultural extension officer does not have the courage to alter the details to suit local conditions.

Cooperatives : Though cooperation and panchayati raj can be regarded as complementary to each other, in actual practice the two have at times posed and behaved as rivals. The panchayati raj institutions are supposed to encourage and promote cooperation but in all the three panchayat samitis which we studied this was not the case. What is more surprising is the fact that even the zila parishad under study, whose pramukh was the president of the Central Cooperative Bank, was itself not able to stimulate the growth of cooperation.

In the meetings of all the three panchayat samitis the problems relating to cooperation came in for a searching scrutiny which generally led to some sharp criticism of the Cooperative Department and its officials. Even in zila parishad meetings the Cooperative Department was severely criticised. The panchayati raj non-officials also did not show any special interest in the formation of cooperative societies or in increasing the membership of the existing societies. In one of the panchayat samitis cooperation was often included as the last item of agenda. The pradhan and the vikas adhikari always expressed the hope that at least every sarpanch would become a member of the cooperative. Even this was not achieved. In another panchayat samiti some of the sarpanchas did become members of cooperative societies. Even there the situation worsened, though for another reason. All the member sarpanchas belonged to the minority group who preferred to run the cooperative society as a rival institution. There was little cooperation between it and the panchayat samiti.

In all the three panchayat samitis efforts were made to utilise the cooperatives as agencies for the distribution of seed and fertiliser. But the necessary coordination between the two institutions was lacking and ultimately the panchayat samitis had to take up

the work on their own.

One of the main reasons for the poor progress recorded in at least two of the three panchayat samitis was the absence of trained personnel. In one of the panchayat samitis the members pointed out that there was no trained cooperative extension officer. Not even an assistant inspector was posted for a long time. In another panchayat samiti a trained cooperative inspector was posted in the initial stages but was later suspended on the ground of dishonesty and corruption. He was replaced by an untrained assistant who could not manage the work properly. The problem was solved only by the middle of 1962 when an assistant inspector was posted.

The problem of recovery of loans is as acute in cooperatives as in panchayat samitis. Many cooperative societies went out of business just because a few persons had not returned the loan they had borrowed. In one of the panchayat samitis out of a total of Rs. 5,00,000 sanctioned as loans overdues were as high as Rs. 2,00,000. In this samiti and in its standing committee on cooperation the members often suggested that one-half of the loans given to the cooperatives should be in kind. The suggestion was however not be accepted because it was felt that it would be difficult to arrange for regular supply of kind loans. The members also felt that cooperative societies would be reluctant to adopt such a scheme.

One of our research officers who closely studied the problem made the following observations.

1. Whenever any reference to the cooperative movement was made in the panchayat samiti general meetings it was bitterly criticised by the members. It was stated that considerable delay was involved in the registration of new societies and in the availability of loans. The Cooperative Department was criticised for being inefficient and incapable of ensuring coordination.

2. The standing committee on cooperation was realistic in its assessment of the problems and difficulties relating to the cooperative movement. But it could not do anything. A training and orientation programme for the representatives of the cooperative societies was also suggested but not held due to continuous failure of the district level officer. Ultimately the vikas adhikari was asked to organise such a *sammelan* at

the time of *panch-sarpanch sammelan.* This was against the wishes of the standing committee.[29]

3. The panchayat samiti members were least sympathetic towards the officials of the Cooperative Department and always found some rerson to launch an attack against any official if he happened to visit the panchayat samiti to attend its general meeting or the meeting of its standing committee. It was generally observed that the Assistant Registrar (Cooperatives) always found himself nervous in facing the panchayat samiti members when any issue relating to the cooperative movement came up for discussion.

4. Unfortunately one trained cooperative inspector who joined the panchayat samiti was found to be corrupt and was suspended. The next who came was also a fresh and untrained hand. The vikas adhikari felt that effective functioning of the cooperative section in such a situation was not possible.

5. Recovery of loans in time from members of the cooperatives was rarely made. This created further problems. Out of a total of Rs. 5,00,000 given as loan to the cooperative societies, outstandings by the end of March, 1963 were as high as Rs. 2,00,000.

6. It was proposed in panchayat samiti general meetings as well as in standing committee meetings that one-half of loans to cooperatives be given in kind *i.e.* in the form of seed, fertiliser or improved implements. But no decision was taken as it was realised that such a system would not be practicable.

7. The distribution of seed and fertiliser loans through cooperatives was viewed as a case of *panchayat vs. cooperative.* The decision therefore went in favour of panchayats.

It may be added that while representatives of cooperative organisation are given a due place in the panchayati raj institutions and, in many cases, panchayat samiti extends financial assistance to cooperative societies, the panchayati raj institutions have no direct link with cooperatives and therefore the two institutions continue to behave as rivals. It is in this context that the suggestions earlier made about having 'panchayat partnered coopera-

... of inactive or defunct ... a campaign and invit- ... work in his hands The ... al interest.

tives' assume importance. These suggestions, if accepted, will go a long way in evolving a healthy pattern of relationship between the two essentially complimentary bodies.

Animal husbandry : Programmes and problems relating to animal husbandry received some place only in one of the three panchayat samitis. In this samiti the Sheep and Wool Department did evince some interest but its activities did not succeed as it could not move with sufficient flexibility.

The panchayat samiti being a pre-extension block, there was no animal husbandry extension officer and the budget provision under the community development schematic budget was not available. The Directorate of Sheep & Wool, Government of Rajasthan, also could not spare much fund and thus one of the most potential sectors remained untouched.

The panchayat samiti also did not take constructive interest in these schemes except demanding for additional facilities and indulging in criticism when such facilities were not made available to them. Out of the funds available under sheep and wool schemes the panchayat samiti however organised two sheep shows every year. These were fairly successful.

Another functional responsibility of the panchayat samiti related to free distribution of better variety of rams. The results were again utterly disappointing. The panchayat samiti in one of its meetings decided to purchase 150 rams of pure breed for free distribution to farmers. Accordingly it purchased 84 rams of the *Malpura* breed in two lots of 30 and 54. The first lot was purchased with the help of the Superintendent, Sheep & Wool Department, and the other in his absence but according to his recommendations. Despite best efforts, the panchayat samiti could however distribute only 61 rams, of which 9 died.

There are a number of reasons for the failure of this scheme. These are analysed below.

1. Of the total sheep population of nearly a lakh, the two main breeds were *Malpura* and *Marwari*. The farmers in the area prefered the *Marwari* breed since it yielded more wool. The Sheep & Wool Department and its technical experts, however, argued that the *Malpura* breed was superior in quality and resistance to disease. In accordance with this advice, the panchayat samiti purchased *Malpura* rams but the farmers did not evince much interest in obtaining them

because most of them possessed *Marwari* sheep. Except in a few panchayats, where the *Malpura* breed was popular the farmers took no interest in these rams.

2. Some of the rams distributed were short statured and appeared to be physically weak. The farmers refused to have such stocks. Moreover, as the rams were taken around on special tours, their physical conditions also deteriorated and some died after contracting anthrax. When the news of their death spread people became even more sceptical and refused to have any ram of this breed.

3. Some rich and well-to-do farmers refused to give free gifts to the panchayat samiti, as they were afraid that it would only lead to governmental interference With the Swatantra Party launching its campaign against cooperative farming, they were all the more apprehensive. They expressed their inability to accept free gifts but were ready to pay a nominal price for the rams taken.

At the end of a strenuous and lengthy campaign, the panchayat samiti decided to take back the rams distributed to the farmers. On the advice of the Sheep & Wool Department it tried to run a sheep breeding farm. This scheme also misfired as the rams by now had grown considerably weak due to the inability of the panchayat samiti to arrange for their grazing and feeding. The farmers therefore refused to use such rams for breeding. The scheme eventually failed because it did not keep in view the local conditions.

While the panchayat samiti faced these difficulties in the operation of this scheme, it experienced no such problems in the distribution of improved variety of bulls to pachayats. This was because the sarpanchas were themselves interested in having bulls free of cost.

In such other schemes as poultry, piggery casteration, inoculation, etc., the progress was again satisfactory because of free distribution of pigs, fowls and other birds. These schemes are also not tied down to any financial commitment. They involved extension of specialised services like inoculation, casteration and opening of service centres. The panchayati raj non-officials are quite willing to have such services. Political factors are also not as important as they are in other type of schemes.

Education : Under the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila

Parishads Act, primary education[30] is a responsibility of panchayat samiti. The experience of decentralisation in this regard has been rather mixed. On the whole, the delegation of this responsibility has worked out smoothly. Excepting some difficulties in the initial period, there has not been any disruption in the administration of primary schools as was feared by some when the responsibility was transferred to panchayat samitis.

The major problem in this field has been non-availability of funds on time, resulting in great hardship to teachers—non-payment of their salaries in time. The problem assumed serious dimensions in the first year of panchayati raj when the Education Department released funds for payment of teachers' salary only, after good deal of persuasion by the pramukh of the zila parishad, the district development officer and some other leading pradhans.

The largest head of expenditure in any panchayat samiti is generally 'primary education'. Usually it runs over a lakh of rupees involving the services of hundreds of primary school teachers. The control of panchayat samiti over primary education is however restricted; the appointments are made by panchayat samitis and zila parishads, but training, pay-scale and posting of teachers are still controlled by the Education Department. The panchayat samiti thus exercises control over its teachers only indirectly.

The role of panchayat samiti in the field of primary education has been mainly confined to suggesting suitable locations for primary schools and their up-grading to middle standard. As far as consultation on the question of opening of new schools is concerned, the position has been quite satisfactory as the zila parishad and panchayat samitis were fully associated by the Education Department in conducting 'education surveys' for the selection of suitable sites for new schools. The Education Department had also taken into consideration the suggestions of panchayat samiti up-grading of schools.

At the same time, it also needs to be emphasized that panchayat samitis have been partisan in their attitude. The dominant group in all the three panchayat samitis consistently favoured those panchayats whose sarpanchas were aligned to it,

30. The Project Team has prepared a seperate case study, *Management of Primary Schools under Panchayati Raj*. It gives useful data and analysis of this problem.

suppressing even the legitimate demands of many panchayats simply because they were represented by sarpanchas belonging to the minority group. This attitude of the dominant group was discussed several times in the panchayat samiti meetings, but not with any positive effect.

The major contribution made by the panchayati raj institutions in the management of primary education has been (a) vigilance and close supervision over primary school teachers and (b) improvement in enrolment of students. The non-official members of panchayats and panchayat samitis do not have any formal power of supervision or control on school teachers. In practice, however, they have been functioning as informal inspecting bodies. As a result of this, the working of teachers has considerably improved. Formerly, the primary schools especially the 'one-teacher' schools were operating in a highly irregular manner. In the absence of regular inspection or on-the-spot supervision, the teachers could therefore manage to get away with many irregularities including prolonged unauthorized absence from their schools. Now, this is hardly possible. There is the sarpanch and other members of panchayati raj institutions always on the vigil. As a result the attendance record of teachers has greatly improved. The villagers are full of praise for this achievement of panchayati raj.

The close association of teachers with panchas, sarpanchas and pradhans has also has its ill-effects. There has been some attempt on the part of non-officials of panchayati raj to use the services of teachers for their own political and personal ends. In general, however, the teachers have not allowed themselves to be so drawn into the cockpit of group politics.

It is the compulsion of circumstances or the degree of informal relationship that determines the teachers' ability to resist the pressure of political forces. If a teacher was satisfied with his job prospects, it was observed that he was less amenable to political pressures than otherwise. It is therefore essential to ensure that the terms and conditions of services of school teachers are determined on an equitable basis and are not left at the discretion of the panchayati raj non-afficials. In this connection it may be added that the practice of inspection of primary schools by the pradhan and even sarpanchas, without them having any authority to do so, is fraught with dangerous consequences. It must be

checked by impressing upon the panchayati raj non-officials that inspection is the job of sub-divisional inspector of schools who is placed in the panchayat samiti mainly for this purpose. At the same time it also needs to be emphasised that in all the three panchayat samitis, the S.D. Is were found to be neglecting their main duty—that of inspecting the schools. They were found to be spending most of their time in the panchayat samiti office, performing routine clerical duties.

Another major field in which the panchayati raj non-officials have worked side by side with the officials is the organisation of *school chalo abhinayns* (go to school drives). In all the three panchayat samitis such drives were organised each year in the months of June and July. The entire panchayat samiti personnel put their best efforts to increase the number of students in the age group of 6 to 11—both boys and girls. These drives were generally successful. A large proportion of new entrants were, however, found to be dropping out even before completing a single year's course. The proclaimed achievements of *school chalo abhiyans* should not therefore be taken at their face value, though such drives are certainly useful and important. The possibility of inflated figures of school enrolment is also great since the appointment of new teachers is made in accordance with the total number of school going children in a panchayt samiti. The panchayat samiti officials and non-officials being interested in showing higher achievements and obtaining larger number of teachers, the temptation to show inflated figures of enrolment is naturally great. The following observations of one of our research officers Table XX. based on detailed examination of this aspect, show how far the targets set forth have been really achieved.

The table shows that only one-half of the targets were fulfilled. The figures are also not very reliable as can be seen from the following observations.

1. The total number of boys and girls on October 2, 1959 was 2710 and 424 respectively (total 3134).

2. The increase in the number of boys and girls as recorded by the panchayat sumiti on account of its enrolment drives from 2nd October, 1959 to March 1963 was 3389 and 2176 respectively (total 5565).

3. The total number of primary school boys and girls should have been therefore 6099 and 2630 respectively, or

Table XX

Period	*Target*	*Achievement*		
		Boys	*Girls*	*Total*
July-Augusts September, 1960	1,000	709	249	958
July-August, 1961	4,500	1760	1004	2764
February, 1962 (girls)	800		454	454
July-August, 1962	4,500	920	469	1389
	10,800	3389	2176	5565

a total of 8699 students in all

4 But the number of boys and girls who were attending the schools and appeared in the examination in April, 1963 was 3634 and 801 respectively, or a total of 4435 students in all.

5 Thus the actual increase in the number of primary school students between 2nd October, 1959 and March, 1963 was 1301—924 boys and 377 girls

It is easy to identify the problems and check the inaccuracy of statistics[31] It is suggested that the strength of students should be measured and compared thrice—first, when the schools open, second, immediately after the enrolment drive and, third, at the end of the session when the number of students appearing for their annual examinations needs to be checked and compared with the reported figures

It may also be pointed out that so far the relationship between the Education Department and the panchayati raj

31 Another research officer commented that ' The primary schools teachers are sometimes responsible for reporting inflated figures of students enrolled The panchayat samiti staff concerned with education and the vikas adhikari are also equally responsible Though they always have misgivings about the information received from the schools, they are equally interested in higher figures of achievement"

institutions has been quit unsatisfactory. The Education Department felt unhappy when its powers where transferred to the panchayati raj institutions. Now that the transfer has taken place, they are rather reluctant to discharge their residuary obligations relating to management of primary schools. They are, in fact, contemptuous of the new set up. Their representatives do not turn up to attend the meetings of panchayati raj institutions and, when they do, they pose and talk like opponents.

Social education: Social education is another sphere of activity where the panchayati raj officials and non-officials are not clear about their role and responsibilities. The social education officers, men and women both, were doing a variety of odd jobs till these posts together with those of gram sevaks were abolished by the Government of Rajasthan in January, 1963. The abolition of these posts did not evoke any protest. The general reaction was that the Government was right in abolishing these posts.

Before the abolition of these posts, social education officers were entrusted with routine office work including inspection of schools. Their services were utilised for organising exhibitions, displays etc. on the occasion of some local fair, festival or other celebrations. The social education officer was also supposed to look after the growth of navyuvak mandals. The lady social education officer was entrusted with the task of mobilising the female population through mahila mandals, sewing centres, cleaniness drives, etc. In the two panchayat samitis where such functionaries were posted, even the block officials appeared to be sceptical about the usefulness of lady social education officers. The lady social education officers on their part complained that since the panchayats and panchayat samitis were not giving any fund for the employment of gramkakis on a regular basis they were unable to find suitable women assistants. Each gramkaki was expected to contact the female members of a group of 20 households and persuade them to adopt cleanly habits in their daily life including prevention of disease, mal-nutrition, etc. The gramkakis however failed to make any impact and the decision to abolish all posts seemed correct.

One of the major responsibilities of the social education staff was to organise night classes for illiterate or neo-literate adults.

The programme however failed to register any significant progress due to a number of problems, many of which were common in all the three panchayat samitis which we studied. The more important of these are listed below.

1. To hold night classes it was necessary to have a suitable venue and provide for some sort of illumination. The first problem was usually solved by using the primary school building as the venue and the second by panchayat samiti giving a grant of Rs. 2 to 3 out of its social education funds.

2. It was very difficult to find teachers to hold these classes, as the teachers of primary and middle schools who were approached for this purpose refused to work without any additional benefits. However, as employer the panchayat samiti was able to put some pressure on the teachers and make them agree to work on an honorary basis. Almost everywhere the teachers expressed resentment for compelling them to give free service when others were earning a lot. They took up the work of adult education most reluctantly.

3. Most villagers could not bring themselves to accept the idea of joining adult education classes after their day's strenuous work and that too under disgruntled youngsters.

4. The literacy drives were confined only to males. The idea of enrolling female adults to such classes was never tried. Also, no efforts were made to organise separate literacy classes for women.

5. Realising the difficulties of teachers, panchayat samitis were asked to institute a 'prize award' system. As the funds for such awards were to be drawn out of panchayat samiti's own income, the suggestion was not liked by the non-officials. Moreover, where cash prizes were awarded, no systematic evaluation of adult education classes was evolved. As a result, complaints were increasingly made against those giving such awards.

6. Panchayat samitis also tried to take punitive measures against teachers who did not take up the work of adult education earnestly. The pradhan and the vikas adhikari together with the concerned extension officers carried out surprise inspections and recommended the stoppage of increment of defaulting teachers. At the instance of the Education Department, panchayat samiti refused to forward applications of those

teachers seeking higher education but not having put in requisite amount of work towards adult education. However, these punitive measures were not very effective because not much evidence could be collected against the defaulting teacher. Most of the primary school teachers were also able to maintain good relations with village elders by doing various errands for them such as drafting their applications and letters. They could always count and cash on the goodwill of these people who saved them from the inspectors. In a few cases verbal complaints against the teachers were made but no formal complaint was lodged.

7. The sarpanchas and the panchas did not enthusiastically participate in the adult education drives.

Industries : The industrial content of the community development programme was almost lacking in all the three panchayat samitis which we studied. The picture was not much different for the entire district of Jaipur. Though an extension officer for industries was posted in two of the three panchayat samitis, the funds allotted for rural industries were meagre and meant chiefly for the development of indigenous arts and crafts. All these funds were utilised for granting loans to individuals and, in a few cases, to industrial cooperatives. But the returns were negligible as the money loaned was itself negligible and, in many cases, even misutilised. On the whole the programme of rural industrialisation therefore failed to make any impact. Even efforts to promote cottage and village industries like tanning, rope making, etc. failed to make any contribution. This was recognised by the Rajasthan Government and the post of Industries Extension Officer was abolished in January, 1963. Some of the industries extension officers, however, tried their best to prepare impressive records of achievement. In one of the panchayat samitis all privately owned and managed industries in its area were included in the progress reports.

Public works : Grants and loans for public works, for example, construction and repair of wells, schools, etc. are channelised through the panchayati raj institutions. The departments concerned (mainly irrigation, agriculture, social welfare and education) indicate the funds available for the use of panchayat samitis. These are allocated by the panchayat samiti at its general meeting or by its standing committee to individuals for execution of

public works under the supervision of panchayats or nirman samitis In the earlier phase of panchayati raj zila parishad was consulted for distribution of funds to panchayat samitis But now the departments usually inform the panchayat samiti directly.

Education of public works through panchayat samitis was found to be unsatisfactory in all the panchayat samitis The major problems affecting the progress of these schemes are listed below

1 The funds meant for public works are very often utilised for personal use

2 These funds are placed in the personal custody of sarpanch who does not maintain proper accounts In many cases the funds are not even deposited in post office or a scheduled bank

3 Though some efforts were made to secure effective utilisation of money by disbursing it in instalments yet the instalments were often released without adhering to this rule

4 Despite repeated reminders, progress reports of public works completed were not submitted in time by the panchayats

5 Technical supervision of the works under execution is difficult, as panchayat samitis have only one overseer who is not able to tour the entire panchayat samiti area and report In many cases the sarpanch and other local people are able to complete a work but find that it does not meet the technical approval of the overseer due to minor discrepancies Certain standards have been laid down for construction of school buildings teachers' quarters village level workers centres etc The local people sometimes fail to adhere to these standards and all their efforts go in vain as the overseer refuses to grant completion certificate In one of the panchayat samitis none of the public works executed was given this certificate

6 Most funds are allotted to persons supporting the pradhan. In the case of one panchayat samiti this was true for all funds distributed by it in 1960-61 This is shown in table XXI

7 The percentage of incomplete public works is rather large This can be seen from Table XXII

Table XXI

Name of person	*Village*	*Designation*	*No. of items for which funds recd.*	*Total amount received*	*Association with pradhan*
S.N.M.	N	Sarpanch	17	13274	Supporter
S.L.	K	,,	4	2559	,,
K.M.	B	,,	13	3179	,,
H.S.J.	N	,,	20	7313	,,
G.L.	R	President	1	1400	,,
P.N.		Navayuvak (Mandal 'R')			
P.N.	S	Sarpanch	22	16963	Younger brother
R.P.	J	Sarpanch	2	5500	Supporter
D.S.	D	,,	22	7649	,,
H.N.	M	,,	13	3141	Up-pradhan
S.L.	H	,,	3	4066	Supporter
N.R.	B	President (Bunder Samiti 'B')	2	2000	,,
R.N.	K	Up-Sarpanch	16	4700	Supporter
B.S.	M	Sarpanch	2	1750	,,
H.B.T.	B	,,	1	250	,,
S.R.	F	Sahkari Samiti 'F'	1	200	,,
		Total	139	72944	

Miscellaneous : Besides these activities, panchayat and panchayat samiti are entrusted with several miscellaneous functions, ranging from collection of vital statistics to distribution of controlled items like cement and sugar. These institutions are often regarded as part and parcel of the official administrative machinery, as agents of the government. Most of the functions thus delegated are however taken up by the panchayati raj institutions

Table XXII*

S.N. of panchayat	*No. of public works for which funds granted*	*Total amount granted*	*No. of recipients*	*No. of works completed*	*No. of incomplete work*
First	17	11063	5	11	6
Second	9	3904	5	4	5
Third	11	8123	4	5	6
Fourth	16	23554	3	7	9
Fifth	9	6154	5	—	9
Sixth	9	5401	4	—	9
Seventh	8	9435	4	—	8
Eighth	11	3579	3	—	11
Ninth	13	4935	4	—	13
Tenth	11	4410	5	—	11
Eleventh	10	5735	7	—	10
Twelfth	14	5471	3	6	8
Thirteenth	12	3207	5	5	7
Fourteenth	23	14214	4	12	11
Fifteenth	12	27053	3	—	12
Sixteenth	15	27550	5	—	15
Seventeenth	15	10747	5	—	15
Eighteenth	13	13900	8	—	13
Ninteenth	15	10217	4	—	15
Twentieth	10	10195	2	2	8
Twenty first	10	9185	3	5	5

* Relates to one of the panchayat samitis studied by the 'project team.'

with greater zeal, if not greater efficiency, than those falling under the definition of 'developmental functions'.

Overall Assessment

Thus far we have tried fo examine the extent to which panchayati raj institutions could help the implementation of transferred schemes in terms of evoking popular initiative and efficient parti-

cipation. We have deliberately avoided the statistical approach. We have taken the official statistics for granted. We had no resources at our disposal to compile our own data and compare it with the official data. We have therefore confined ourselves only to identifying the more important obstacles which affect the implementation of the transferred schemes so that these could be removed and the panchayati raj institutions helped to deliver the desired goods.

It may not, however, be out of place to record the impression of one of our research officers (which is borne out by others also). According to him, "there appears to be a wide gap between the statistical records of achievements and actual performance". For :

1. The targets are fixed unrealistically at the state level which percolates down to local levels. There is little relation between the targets fixed and that which could be achieved at the local level. In spite of this, the officials rush forward to achieve the targets which only creates a wider gap between the statistical records of performance and real achievements.

2. This, in turn, weekens the morale of public life and in a way compels the officials to show exaggerated results to serve their interest. Besides procedural bottlenecks, lack of field experience on the part of extension officers, lack of coordination between officials and non-officials and, above all, want of development-orientation lead to further deterioration in performance.

As development units the panchayati raj institutions have not been able to make any significant impact. This is at least true of the areas which we surveyed. We have however no desire to to generalise on the basis of this sample.

As units of development the panchayati raj institutions have been mostly given promotional role. But they are tied down to administrative procedures and practices and, more than that, taken in by the all absorbing game of power politics. The panchayati raj personnel, both official and non-official, more often than not fritter away their energies in power politics, factionalism and groupism and thus fail to inspire the confidence of the people. What limits the functional utility of these institutions still more is the practice of giving 'project' grants for distribution to other beneficiaries. The proeedural details of this and the

bargaining which follows for such niggardly resources often become the *be all* and *end all* of the activities of panchayat samitis and panchayats In spite of these limitations, it cannot be denied that

1 Politics in some measure is to be accepted as part and parcel of the democratic process at the grass roots level

2 With minor structural changes (already detailed elsewhere) and improvements in financial administration and provision of administrative innovations, the performance of panchayati raj institutions as development agents can be considerably improved and hence there is no cause for alarm

3 The panchayati raj institutions have certainly brought in their wake development consciousness The average villager now understands and can often even speak the language of development It is a great achievement in itself in a region like Rajasthan which has been backward both economically and politically

Towards Improving Work Performance

It may be worthwhile at the end to make some suggesions for improving the performance of panchayati raj institutions

1 To an average villager panchayat is an all purpose organisation Therefore, until panchayats are in a position to meet his felt needs and solve his problems on the spot the institution would not get firmly rooted It may be premature to think of decentralisation of finance and non devlopmental administration at the panchayat level yet some liaison should be established between the units of revenue administration and panchayats so that the average villager may feel that even for his difficulties in matters relating to revenue and other non-developmental administration the way lies through the panchayat This would draw the villager to panchayat and also give it a firm root

2 The tendency to regard panchayat and panchayat samiti as field extension units of state administration should be curbed

3 It may be worthwhile to have a limited panchayati raj sector at a minimum level where the panchayati raj institutions may be left free to plan for themselves, to allocate and spend the resources as they like and also to implement and follow-up

the results of the schemes of their own making. This would be a step in the direction of centralised national planning and planning from below. This is a vital necessity if the panchayati raj institutions are to develop both initiative and interest in their work. Unless these institutions are granted a limited measure of autonomy in terms of planning, implementation and control of finances, they would neither feel inspired nor would they be firmly rooted in the soil of rural India. In fact, panchayati raj institutions have created expectations both in terms of autonomy and self-management and something has to be urgently done to cope with the challenge of these expectations.

4. The practice of routing loans and subsidies to individuals through the panchayati raj bodies should be thoroughly reviewed with a view to ensure equitable distribution and yearly recovery of such funds. The election to standing committee on the basis of proportional representation, as suggested earlier, will go a long way in this direction.

5. The panchayati raj institutions have not succeeded in helping the weaker sections of society. Unless a separate fund is made available to the panchayat samiti and the terms of disbursement of loans and other benefits are relaxed, the panchayati raj institutions are not likely to succeed in helping the weaker sections.

6. The management of primary schools should either be vested in autonomous school boards or in the zila parishad so that the school teachers may be eligible for transfer and promotion on a district basis and, more than that, they may be away from local 'pressure politics.'

7. The state level *O and M Unit* should undertake intensive studies concerning rationalisation of administration at the panchayat samiti level such as procedures involving lot of paper work, de-linking of extension personnel from basic job and so on.

VI

The Zila Parishad at Work

THE zila parishad is mainly a supervisory, coordinating, advisory body. It has little or no executive function to perform. This is clearly evident from the statutory *Powers and Functions of Zila Parishad.* According to the Act, every zila parishad is thus empowered to:

(i) examine according to rules made in this behalf the budgets of panchayat samitis in the district;

(ii) distribute among the panchayat samitis the *ad hoc* grants allotted to the district by the State Government;

(iii) coordinate and consolidate the plans prepared by panchayat samitis;

(iv) coordinate the work of panchayats and panchayat samitis;

(v) exercise and perform such other powers and functions in relation to any development programme as the State Government may, by notification, confer on or entrust to it,

(iv) exercise and perform such powers and functions as are conferred on and delegated or entrusted to it by or under this Act;

(vii) classify fairs and festivals, other than those that are or may hereafter be managed by the State Government as panchayat fairs and festivals and panchayat samiti fairs and festivals and review, upon a representation made in that behalf by a panchayat or a panchayat samiti, such classification;

(viii) classify roads (other than national highways, state

highways and major district roads) as panchayat samiti roads and village roads;

(ix) supervise generally the activities of panchayat samiti in the district;

(x) organise camps, conferences and seminars of all sarpanchas, pradhans and other panchas and members of panchayats and panchayat samitis in the district;

(xi) advise the State Government on all matters concerning the activities of panchayats and panchayat samitis;

(xii) advise the State Government on all matters relating to the implementation of any statutory or executive order specially referred to by the State Government to the zila parishad;

(xiii) advise the State Government on all matters relating to the implementation within the district of the various schemes under the five year plans;

(xiv) watch over all agricultural and production programmes, construction programmes, employment and other targets laid down for the district and see that they are being properly carried out, accomplished and implemented and review at least twice a year the progress of such programmes and targets;

(xv) collect such data as it deems necessary;

(xvi) publish statistics or any other information relating to the activities of the local authorities in the district; and

(xvii) require any local authority to furnish information regarding its activities.

These heads can be clearly classified into three categories—*supervisory* (item nos. i, ix, xiv); *coordination* (item nos, ii, iii, iv, vii, viii, x, xv); and *advisory* (item nos. xi, xii, xiii, xvi, xvii). The two remaining items (v and vi) are of general nature dealing with certain permissive cases.

The zila parishad under our study was performing all these functions, though its actual performance was not of the same quality in all the cases as can be seen from the following analysis.

Supervisory Functions

The Act entrusts two important supervisory functions: (i) examination of the budgets of panchayat samitis and (ii) keeping a watch over agricultural and production programmes and reviewing the progress made in these fields at least twice a year.

The zila parishad had entrusted to its standing committee on finance and administration (with pramukh as its chairman) the task of scrutinising the budgets of panchayat samitis So far the committee did this job only once, in 1962 63

The budgets received from the panchayat samitis are handed over to the District Development Officer who scrutinises them in the light of the rules framed in this regard by the Government under the title *Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Financial Account and Budget Rules, 1959* These rules only prescribe the technical from of the budget The District Development Officer therefore confines himself to checking these technicalities and seeing that they are duly complied with He also prepares a note giving his general and detailed comments The budgets along with the note and comments of the District Development Officer are then submitted to the standing committee of zila parishad

The note and comments of the District Development Officer are usually approved without any dissent by the standing committee In its meeting held on 15-6-1962 the committee thus considered the District Development Officer s note, unanimously accepted it, and decided that panchayat samitis should modify their budgets in accordance with his note and comments Again in its meeting held on 25-9-1962 The standing committee unanimously approved the comments of the District Development Officer pertaining to the budget of one of the panchayat samitis In this case also, the committee decided to return the original budget to the panchayat samiti together with the comments made on it by the District Development Officer for incorporating necessary changes in the budget The note was also circulated in the general meeting of the zila parishad It did not evoke any discussion or criticism

The function of scrutinising the samiti budgets is thus discharged primarily by the District Development Officer and that too on technical grounds alone Since the notes and comments of the District Development Officer were never discussed in the general meetings of zila parishad, its members cannot be said to have discharged their role creditably It may also be added that only 4 to 5 members of the 'eight member standing committee attended the meetings held on 15-6-1962 and 25-9-1962 when the

samiti budgets were discussed and the note and comments of the District Development Officer were unanimously approved. The fact that the zila parishad could exercise only technical supervision over the budgets of panchayat samitis is however more significant.

Taking advantage of this situation the District Development Officer had even issued some general directives to panchayat samitis, stressing certain objectives and aims which they were asked to keep in mind while framing their budgets.[32] Drawing their attention to the targets adopted by the *panch-sarpanch sammelan* he had thus requested them to make necessary changes in their budgets. "Every panchayat samiti", he had further stressed, "should make some initial grants-in-aid to each navyuvak mandal, mahila mandal and education committee in its area." In another instance he had asked the panchayat samitis to take up the work of loan recovery seriously.

A post-budget study of panchayat samitis however reveals that none of them had implemented all the suggestions made by the District Development Officer in his notes and comments, nor had they reported to the zila parishad the progress made in this direction.

Another major function of zila parishad is to exercise overall supervision over the production and other programmes of panchayat samitis including review of their progress. As yet the zila parishad has not laid down any general principle in this regard, nor has it set up a system of priorities for the panchayat samitis to follow. It has evolved, mainly on the suggestion of the District Development Officer, a set of *ad-hoc* recommendations for the benefit of panchayat samitis. Usually this takes the form of quarterly 'drives' highlighting the scope of a few selected schemes drawn up by the District Development Officer in the light of some special circumstances such as seasonal demand or emergency, and sending these to panchayat samitis with the express request that they should, as far as feasible in the light of local conditions, concentrate on these schemes and achieve the suggested targets. An idea about the content of these drives ean be obtained from the following table.

32. See *Appendix I.*

Table XXIII

Period	*Activities*
July-September 1961	1. Enrolment of Students 2. Increase in Fruit Plantation 3. More *'medhbundi'*
October-December 1961	1. Propagation of improved varieties of seeds 2. Purchase of better bullocks 3. Increase in membership of cooperative societies
April-June 1962	1. Organising *panch-sarpanch sammelan* 2. Increasing the membership of service cooperatives
July-September 1962	1. Increasing the number of female students 2. Distribution of improved seeds 3. Preparation of loan applications for service cooperatives

These drives cover all the important aspects of rural development. The practice of fixing precise targets for a quarter and then reviewing their progress has proved to be very useful. The drives were usually undertaken with great care, and their timing excellently planned. Construction of new wells was thus to be done before the sowing time; students were to be enrolled at the beginning of the academic session; and the like. The members also appreciated the advantages of these drives. They even suggested that each panchayat and panchayat samiti should fix its quarterly progress report on the notice-board.

Generally, many points were emphasised in these drives. But on special occasion they were directed to focus attention on specific items of development. Thus the 'June-September quarter' was primarily devoted to enrolment of students and the 'April-June

quarter' for the promotion of handicrafts. Towards the middle of 1962, when a big locust invasion took place, an anti-locust drive was launched. This was a great success. It was followed by 'fund collection' drive for the National Defence Fund which was equally successful.

Apart from organising these quarterly drives and reviewing their progress, the Jaipur Zila Parishad has also set up an evaluation committee to review and evaluate the work of panchayat samitis. Such problems as location of samiti headquarters and offices, purchase of stores and stationery, maintenance of garage, provision for a jeep, and problems relating to administration of panchayat samitis were also dealt with by the zila parishad.

It has however not established any regular channel of communication. It relies on *ad hoc* information and takes appropriate action as and when necessary. Most of such information is obtained by the pramukh from official communications, informal contact and occasional tours and inspections. The tour reports or the inspection notes of the pramukh are never placed before the parishad meeting and, even when they are placed on official record, they are treated as 'confidential.' In a general way, however, the pramukh places before the members his findings. Sometimes the members bring to the notice of zila parishad cases of violation of law and infringement of rules by panchayat samitis. The zila parishad takes note of these and issues general circular asking all panchayat samitis to resist from such illegal and irregular activities.

To sum up, the zila parishad does try to scrutinise and supervise the administrative practices and procedures of panchayat samitis and, from time to time, points out the irregularities committed by them and prevents them from indulging in any illegal or extra-legal activities. This supervision is however not conducted on any regular footing. It is based on occasional tours of the pramukh and information received from a number of sources such as peoples' complaints, official reports and members' speeches.

Coordinative Functions

Among the main functions of this nature which the Act has entrusted to the zila parishad are: (i) distribution of *ad hoc* grants allotted by the State Government; (ii) consolidation of samiti plans; (iii) classification of fairs and festivals; (iv) classification of

roads, (v) organisation of camps and conferences, and (vi) collection of statistics and other information

The zila parishad recommends how grants and grants-in aid available from various government departments for panchayati raj institutions in the district are to be distributed to them Earlier, this work was done by the zila parishad itself but now it is being handled by its standing committees The heads of various departments indicate to the standing committee concerned the total amount available and the programmes on which it could be spent [33] Sometimes the class of people (such as scheduled tribes and castes) on whom these funds could be spent is also specified The zila parishad has only to recommend the actual amount to be distributed to the concerned panchayat samitis

Generally, the zila parishad and its sub committees allocate the available amount equally to all those panchayat samitis which are eligible to receive it Sometimes the funds are also allocated to panchayat samitis on the basis of their population Seldomly, however, these are allacated on the basis of detailed examination of the needs and requirements and resource position of panchayat samitis This is evident from Table XXIV

The zila parishad and its standing committee only allocate the funds and ask the departments concerned to transfer the amount recommended directly to the receipient panchayat samitis It gives directions to panchayat samitis about proper utilisation of these funds and also tries to obtain funds for them from various sources The zila parishad under our study thus took active steps to secure, on behalf of panchayat samitis, medium term loans from the Central Cooperative Bank (the maximum amount which the Bank thus loans is Rs 40,000) It also drew up a plan according to which the panchayat samitis were to use this loan

It kept a close watch on all such sources from where funds could be obtained for and by panchayat samitis and tried to remove the obstacles causing delay in their sanction or release For this purpose it incurred even losses For instance, once when despite best efforts, it could not persuade the Education Department to release funds for payment of teachers' salaries, it had to pay them out of its own funds

33 For example, the Director of Social Welfare Department would channelise his Department's grants through social service and education sub committee

Table XXIV

Date	*Distributed by*	*Received from*	*Received for*	*Total grants (Rs.)*	*Manner of distribution*
17-2-60	Zila Parishad	Irrigation Department	Small irrigation	2,20,040	Distributed equally to 17 panchayat samitis
17-2-60	Zila Parishad		Forest	6,000	Distributed equally to 10 panchayat samitis
17-2-60	Zila Parishad	Developmemt Department	Construction of school buildings	57,500	Distributed equally to 17 panchayat samitis
14-7-62	Production sub-committee	Planning & Developmet Department	Construction of new wells	2,61,000	Distributed equally to 17 panchayat samitis
21-9-61	Social Service & Education sub-committee	Social Welfare Department	Wells and other water facilities for scheduled tribes and castes	12,000	Distributed Rs. 8,000 equally to 6 panchayat samitis and Rs. 4,000 to other panchayat samitis
27-6-62	Social Service & Education sub-committee	Social Welfare Department	Drinking water wells for scheduled tribes and castes, and roads for scheduled tribe villages	10,000	Distributed Rs. 5,000 to one panchayat samiti, and Rs. 2,500 each to 2 predominantly scheduled Caste populated panchayat samitis
24-8-62	Social Service & Education sub-committee	Development Department	Drinking water wells	37,000	Distributed to 17 panchayat samitis on the basis of their population

The Education Department had handed over the management of schools to panchayat samitis without giving them the funds for meeting the salary of teachers. As a result, panchayat samitis had to pay the teachers from funds meant for other purposes. This continued for about a year. Althrough this period the zila parishad tried its best, entered into protracted correspondence with the Government of Rajasthan and tried to persuade the Education Department to release the necessary funds.

The zila parishad also tried to indicate to the departments the likely requirements of panchayat samitis and, in some cases, recommended the actual amount of grant required. On the whole, however, it did not take an active interest in securing more grants for panchayat samitis. It did little to impress upon the departments the needs and requirements of different areas and panchayat samitis. In many cases, in fact, it had no idea about the source from where a particular grant came from and to what use it could be put. In many such cases it had to refer the matter to the department concerned and obtain its clarifications. It also appears that the departmental budgets were framed without consulting or even informing the zila parishad as a result of which its performance could not but be slow and fumbling.

The zila parishad took great interest in the work of preparation of the Third Five Year Plan of the district. With the help of panchayat samitis and district level officers it prepared the Plan and published it by the end of 1960. This Plan, as earlier stated, comprised the five year plans of all panchayat samitis in the district which were framed according to the direction, information and instructions issued by the zila parishad. It can thus claim to have creditably discharged its role and functions in this respect. Apart from consolidating the five year plans of panchayat samitis, the zila parishad coordinated their programmes by issuing general and specific directives for taking up 'quarterly drives' and by reviewing their annual progress reports.

For discharging its functions relating to classification of fairs, festivals and roads, the zila parishad completely relied on the information furnished by panchayats and panchayat samitis. The information so obtained was consolidated and submitted by the zila parishad to the State Government. From the official records it seems that this work was never included in the agenda of zila parishad meetings. The work was carried out simply as part of

office routine and it did not raise any serious controversy.

The zila parishad also took up with great enthusiasm the work of organising camps, seminars and conferences of panchas and other people. The most important of these is the *pancha sarpanch sammelan* which is organised each year by every panchayat samiti. In all the zila parishad provided a sum of Rs. 4000 for the conduct of these *sammelans.* The panchayat samitis also contributed a part of the expenses. These *sammelans* provide an opportunity to all those connected with or interested in the working of panchayati raj in a panchayat samiti to meet together and discuss their common problems.

The zila parishad also took initiative in organising village sahayak camps, progressive farmers training shivirs, panchayat secretaries' training camps, coopted women members' seminars, women panchas *sammelan* and such other seminars and conferences which provided a forum for dissemination of knowledge and information about panchayati raj. It had even planned to hold a seminar of all those candidates who were defeated in the panchayat polls. The project, however, had to be dropped on the advice of the Development Department.

In the organisation of these camps and conferences the zila parishad mainly played the role of a coordinator—making such decisions as the place, time, purpose and procedure of such 'get-togethers' including, at times, sanction of some grants or aids. The detailed arrangement of these 'get-togethers' was however left to the concerned organisers.

As far as collection of statistics and other information is concerned, the zila parishad took all necessary steps and a regular stream of facts and figures flowed in to its office. As yet, it has however not developed any special technique, nor has it established any system of regular reporting by the panchayat samitis. Up till now the zila parishad has not published any progress report. Information of this nature is however available in plenty in the Collector's annual report which has been published by the zila parishad in a booklet form.

At one time the zila parishad had decided to publish an annual abstract of district statistics and a monthly magazine on panchayati raj in the district. None of these projects could however be materialised due to lack of interest and paucity of funds.

Advisory Function

Under the Act the zila parishad is charged with the responsibility of advising the State Government regarding (i) the activities of panchayat and panchayat samitis, (ii) the implementation of any statutory or executive order referred to it, and (iii) all matters relating to the implementation of various schemes of the five year plan in the district.

As far as its general advisory role is concerned, the zila parishad has been very vigilant and has maintained a constant communication channel with the State Government. From time to time it has brought the general as well as specific problems of panchayats and panchayat samitis in the district to the notice of the department or departments concerned and, on certain occasions, has even contacted the Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister. In fact, in the meetings of zila parishad most of the time is spent by the pradhans and other members in bringing home their problems and difficulties and requesting the zila parishad to transmit these to the government.

The zila parishad has played a notable role in advising the government about educational matters falling within the jurisdiction of panchayats and panchayat samitis. It also contributed to '*school chalo abhiyans*' (go to school campaigns) by constantly advising the government about the opening and location of new schools and such other requirements as adequate teaching staff. The zila parishad appointed a village survey committee which carried out on-the-spot investigations and submitted the names of villages where new primary and basic schools could be opened. The zila parishad showed special interest in checking and revising this 'village list.' It discussed the issue several times in its meetings.

The zila parishad also advised the government about higher secondary and high schools. Apart from construction of school buildings, it took keen interest in securing the services of teaching staff needed for these schools and keeping constant touch with the educational authorities.

The zila parishad is required to give advice to the State Government on such matters as location of schools, distribution of grants, location of primary health centres, allocation of quotas —cement, tin, coal and other commodities—to the panchayat samitis, location of panchayat or *gram sevak* headquarters, etc.

The zila parishad handled all these tasks well. It even managed to keep away controversies on such sensitive issues as 'recommending the name of pre-extension blocks for further upgrading.'

For all these matters, the Jaipur Zila Parishad had to maintain constant *rapport* with the Planning and Development Department, especially with the Joint Development Commissioner who was incidentally the District Development Officer at the time the zila parishad was inaugurated. The officer who was then holding the post of Joint Development Commissioner succeeded him to the post of District Development Officer. The zila parishad had thus the double advantage of having a District Development Officer who was familiar with the routine and procedures of the office of Joint Development Commissioner and, at the same time, having a Joint Development Commissioner who was well informed about the district and sympathetic to its problems. The physical proximity and direct telephonic link between the parishad's office and the Joint Development Commissioner's office were the other added advantages.

The zila parishad was thus happily situated in its relations with the Development Department and this contributed a great deal to its achievements. It was seldom a victim of red tape. Till now its relations with the Planning and Development Department are smooth, cordial and satisfactory.

The State Government is also empowered under the Act to ask for the advice of zila parishad regarding execution of any statutory or executive order issued by it. But such an occasion arose only twice in the case of the zila parishad which we studied. The first was when the State Government charged a pradhan for casting the vote of an 'absentee' sarpanch at the election of standing committees in his panchayat samiti. The issue became a subject of long-drawn discussion. Many members wanted to know whether the pradhan was given a chance to explain his position, and quite a few of them felt the need for a fresh inquiry into the charges levelled against him. Some even demanded that the sarpanch involved in the case be brought before the meeting. However, at the end, the zila parishad only adopted (unanimously) the following resolution.

> If the State Government has taken any decision in accordance with the provisions of the rules in the Act, the zila parishad will agree with any decision and action which it takes.

The wording of this decision clearly reveals that the zila parishad failed to find any effective means of giving its advice to the Government It did not know the circumstances in which the illegal act was committed nor had it any access to the relevant records It did not participate in the investigation conducted by the Government but was presented with a *fait accompli* and having no means to ascertain the truth had to agree to the decision of the Government. In effect, the 'advice' of the zila parishad thus amounted to a mere formality

It may be mentioned that issues such as this create a lot of discussion in zila parishad meetings Such discussions about the guilt or otherwise of a fellow member cannot but rouse the passions of members, leading to partisan attitudes on a matter about which most of them are quite ignorant They not only lead to time consuming, futile, debates but also divert the attention and efforts of the members of zila parishad from constructive activities.

On another occasion the State Government had informed the zila parishad that the pradhan of one of the panchayat samitis had submitted false T A and D A claims and that for this reason he had been suspended The advice of the zila parishad was also sought in this case Once again, opinions in the parishad meeting were sharply divided and the entire discussion degenerated into what may be best described as shadow-boxing This was apparent from the way certain members insisted that the pradhan in question was guilty and the equally vehement manner in which others claimed him to be an innocent victim, as he was ignorant of the nature and complexity of accounting rules and procedures which enabled the vikas adhikari, who was always working against him, to trick him Many members admitted the contention of the District Development Officer that there was something 'rather unusual' in the pradhan's submitting T.A and D A bills for the entire term of his office They however referred to the pradhan's letter of explanation in which he had stated that in view of the minor technical offence committed by him he may be leniently dealt with. According to them the main culprit was the vikas adhikari who, they demanded, ought to be severely punished The zila parishad found itself almost deadlocked on this issue and only a resounding appeal from the pramukh that it was against the set traditions of the zila parishad to decide a matter such as this by voting that the following compromise decision was reached

The pradhan be given a warning and acquitted and the vikas adhikari and other concerned officers, if found guilty, be punished.

This once again reveals that the zila parishad is not in a position to offer any 'advice' in these matters. As one of its own members was involved in the case, the very process of discussion created an unhappy and unhealthy atmosphere. It is often said that in cases such as these things would considerably improve if the State Government consults the zila parishad before it launches any enquiry or suspends a member. Such a plea is however not likely to find favour with the State Government as it might lead to premature leakage of confidential information and thus destory the usefulness of the very enquiry. There are cases where action should follow immediately after the detection of a 'wrong'. If the government has to wait till the next meeting of zila parishad takes place, the offenders will get enough opportunity to cover up their offences and thus escape punishment. The possibility of the State Government conveying to the zila parishad the information it possesses and the action it proposes to take can therefore be ruled out as impracticable and even undesirable, especially in view of the fact that often the government has to launch enquiry against the members of zila parishad itself.

When these issues were being discussed a suggestion was put forward by some members of the zila parishad that the zila parishad should constitute a committee to deal with such matters. The suggestion was rejected by the pramukh on the ground that there was no provision in the Act for the constitution of such a committee. Though this view was not challenged, it does not appear to be correct if one takes a close look at the Act. As far as zila parishad is concerned, the Act does not mention any committee by name. There is only a general clause according to which 'Every zila parishad may constitute for the performance of its *functions under this Act* such sub-committees as it may deem necessary'. Since advising the State Government in such cases is patently a statutory function of zila parishad, there is no legal bar on the zila parishad to have a sub-committee for dealing with such matters and adopting such methods of investigation as lie within its general powers. The committee of investigation could thus be put in charge of all such cases and it can hold its own meetings, call witnesses, record evidence and present its findings to the zila parishad.

A committee of this type would however have its own limitations and these need to be recognised Since it will be a committee constituted by and from the members of zila parishad, its composition has to be such that the member against whom an investigation is launched is automatically excluded from its membership during the period of enquiry Such an arrangement can be secured by forming *ad hoc* committees to deal with particular cases which are referred to the zila parishad The zila parishad should request the state authorities to fully cooperate with the work of these committees and thus enable them to arrive at sound decisions The government should get in touch with the committee at the earliest possible stage of its enquiry and keep it informed of all the developments If such an arrangement can be worked out, the zila parishad can then have a reliable machinery to collect evidence and facts on the basis of which it would give its advice to the government, instead of giving blanket consent to any decision or action of the government The staff of panchayati raj would also welcome such a committee, as it would give them an opportunity to explain their position A better alternative, perhaps, may be to constitute an independent *Panchayati Raj Tribunal* at the district headquarters, consisting of the Collector, pramukh and a retired judge A corresponding *Panchayati Raj Appelate Tribunal* may be established at the state level so that the state may delegate its responsibility in this regard to these tribunals

The zila parishad also acts as a medium of advice and information about implementation of various plan' schemes in the district This function was carried out in a general way The zila parishad seldom dealt with specific schemes or problems As a matter of fact, it relied entirely on the statements and accounts furnished by the panchayat samitis, supplemented by the impressionistic views of pradhans and M L As Except *ad hoc* evaluation teams, the zila parishad does not possess a systematic machinery to obtain information about implementation of 'plan' schemes It cannot therefore appraise the State Government about the progress of these plans or advise it in this regard It has however provided a useful forum for the government officials to offer general and specific suggestions to panchayats and panchayat samitis about implementation of 'plan' schemes The zila parishad meetings were thus used to impart information and instructions on specific schemes such as locust control, pest extermination etc Various government depart-

ments, as stated elsewhere, sent their representatives to these meetings to explain their policies and programmes and to enlist the cooperation of the non-officials of panchayati raj.

Among the top officials who visited the zila parishad at one time or the other were the Commissioner (Ajmer Division), Chief Secretary (Government of Rajasthan), Additional Small Savings Officer, Joint Development Commissioner, Divisional Manager (Life Insurance Corporation, Ajmer), Superintending Engineer (Electricity Board), Director of Agriculture and some Ministers including the Chief Minister.

These officers mainly provided information on specific issues requiring the attention of panchayats and panchayat samitis. A few examples will illustrate the point. The Chief Secretary thus spoke at length about the process of *planning from below* and indicated the main points and priorities which the zila parishad were to keep in mind. The Accounts Officer, Government of Rajasthan, explained the accounting procedures and tried to suggest remedies with a view to solving the difficulties faced by the vikas adhikaris. The Divisional Manager, L.I.C., explained the various aspects of Rural Life Insurance Scheme. The Superintending Engineer, Electricity Board, informed the members about the Village Electrification Scheme, and so on.

One of the most interesting encounters between the members of zila parishad and the government officers took place when the Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Department, drew the attention of members to the fact that the cultivators were refusing to utilise the irrigation facilities provided by the Kalakho and the Morel dams. The Kalakho dam is located in the Sikrai Panchayat Samiti. The pradhan of Sikrai explained that the farmers were reluctant to use water from the dam because in their opinion the water was not good for cultivation—a fact which they had even brought to the notice of the concerned authorities. Samples of soil affected by the water of Kalakho dam were also sent for chemical analysis. The Superintending Engineer, admitting the fact, pointed out that according to soil analyst's reports made available to him there was nothing wrong with the water and that the farmer's fears and doubts were therefore groundless. The pradhan and other members contested the validity of this statement and emphasised that they could show the exact spot where the Kalakho dam water had damaged the soil by depositing some

foreign substance—three feet deep in the soil The issue was debated at length but neither the Superintending Engineer nor his assistants could convince the members of zila parishad Regarding the use of water from Morel dam the members pointed out that the betterment levies were so high that the farmers preferred not to have water from the dam They pleaded for the abolition of betterment levy, at any rate for a drastic cut in the prevalent rates Once again, the Superintending Engineer could not satisfy the members' demand He explained that since the betterment levy was being levied by the State Government on the advice of the Government of India it had to be paid by the users

Though the various government departments generally sent their representatives to the zila parishad meetings, the members always complained that these officials never answered their questions on the ground of lack of information They only assured that they 'would look up the matter and explain it in the next meeting' The members objected to these tactics and frequently called upon the pramukh to formally write to the State Government or the concerned departments to send their top officials to these meetings It was also complained that some departments like the Forests, Cooperation, Education, etc did not at all care to send their representatives

Towards Strengthening the Zila Parishad

Briefly, this is the picture of zila parishad at work We now turn to the question of strengthening the zila parishad which is closely linked with the basic question of (i) the unit of decentralisation, (ii) the possibility of extension of powers within the present framework, and (iii) the measures necessary for streamlining the administration of zila parishad

When we talk of strengthening the zila parishad, the fundamental question involved is 'should the district be the units of decentralisation or should it be the block, as it is in the present set up of Rajasthan?' For more than one reason it is not feasible to have the Maharashtra model district as the unit of decentralisation First, it would amount to reversing the entire process of evolution of the panchayati raj set up in Rajasthan It would have been easier to treat the district as the unit of decentralisation at the time panchayati raj was introduced than now when it would mean turning the whole structure upside down It would

lead to a chain of reactions at all the tiers thus unsetting the process of psychological adjustment which is now in the offing.

Secondly, it is also doubtful whether decentralisation which starts and stops at the district level would be decentralisation worth the name, as power here would not really percolate down to the grass roots. The basic objective of panchayati raj—to involve the rural people in a joint partnership concern for self-government and self-development—would thus remain unfulfilled. Power would get decentralised at a point far too removed from the people and, consequently, the latter remaining inert and apathetic to their obligations to the rural community. The problem of their voluntary and zealous participation in the tasks of rural development would remain at a level where the authors of the Balwantray Mehta Report had found it.

Thirdly, as a logical corollary to the second, panchayati raj with district as the unit of decentralisation would not provide the right impetus to the emergence of rural leadership at the grass roots level.

The correct approach in the specific context of Rajasthan will be to tackle the issue of the extension of powers of zila parishad within the limitations of the present system which is more suited to decentralisation of power at grass roots level than the Maharashtra model. The following suggestions indicate the broad directions of this extension of power.

1. Though in general the role of zila parishad may continue to be one of advisory and coordinating nature, a limited sector within its jurisdiction of functions and powers should be developed. The zila parishad may be allowed to (i) manage education up to the middle standard, including primary education which would draw out the management of primary schools from the orbit of 'direct and immediate' politics; (ii) act as in charge of such operational activities as could be better done at the district level than at the block level such as building of roads, public works etc.; (iii) plan for the district as a whole in active collaboration with the two other units of the three-tier structure which are in themselves not viable units of planning in terms of resources and technical know-how; (iv) act as supply unit for the panchayat samitis in the district in regard to seed, fertilisers, poultry birds, etc; (v) maintain seed multiplication farms, pantry breeding farms, etc. for the dis-

trict as a whole, and (vi) conduct research, evaluation and other clearing house activities

2 All funds available from different sources should be routed through the zila parishad to panchayat samitis and panchayats so that a single source of accountability and supervision is established

3 The zila parishad should have its own budgetary resources for carrying on the activities falling in its sector and for financing undertakings of general utility for panchayati raj institutions in the district as a whole, particularly with regard to welfare of the weaker sections of society

4 The state may prescribe a compulsory schedule of taxes for the panchayati raj institutions which should be levied uniformly and from one source, namely, the zila parishad The two other panchayati raj institutions being too near to the people are not well suited to tax them

What is equally important, if not more, is the need to streamline the zila parishad administration Some useful steps which may be taken up in this regard are suggested below

1. The secretary of zila parishad should be a senior R A S or better still an I A S officer whose very presence would impart dignity and prestige to the institution

2 While a non-official may continue to be the chairman of zila parishad, it may be worthwhile to make the Collector of the district the chairman of all the standing committees of zila parishad or, at any rate, the chairman of its committee on planning and production The work of development would then receive the priority and consideration which it should from the panchayati raj institutions Moreover, the problem of involving the district level officers in the activities of the panchayati raj institutions would also be solved to a great extent

3 The system of inspection by the zila parishad should be strengthened by instituting a regular inspectorate at the zila parishad level which may work under the direction of its chairman and secretary The panchayat inspectors who are at present attached to the Collector's office may be attached to the zila parishad Their strength may also be increased, if necessary Gradually the sphere of activities of the inspectorate may be extended to perform 'efficiency audit and *O M*

activities' under the direction of an 'efficiency audit and *O.M.* activities cell' at the state level.

4. The system of communication between the zila parishad on the one hand and the two other units of the three-tier structure on the other needs to be thoroughly streamlined. For this purpose as also for better recognition of the role of zila parishad by the lower units, the office of the zila parishad itself has to be organised on a more efficient footing than what it is now.

VII

Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj

GRAM sabha is conceived today as the broad-base supporting the three-tier structure of panchayati raj In this chapter we shall try to assess its strength and suggest ways and means of reinforcing it so that panchayati raj can be assured a continuous and organic sustenance from below[34]

The Balwantray Mehta Committee in its quest for a 'representative and democratic' institution focussed its attention on panchayat and, under the general policy framework accepted by the Planning Commission and the Parliament, directed its energies towards devising a democratic structure of district administration with panchayat as the lower most unit[35] A close perusal of the report shows that the term 'gram sabha' does not figure anywhere in Section 2 of the report wherein the proposals relating to democratic decentralisation are outlined The Balwantray Mehta Committee had adopted an institutional approach to effect decentralisation and as such recommended the setting up of an interlinked three-tier structure consisting of panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad, each exercising supervisory (and/or advisory) jurisdiction over the unit below it

According to the scheme envisaged in the report (and adopted by most states with minor adaptations) all the three-tiers of panchayati raj are statutory bodies which readily fit in with the district administrative set up. At each level, the report also recommended for the association of official personnel.[36] Lastly, the report explicitly charged these bodies with those development functions which were entrusted to the various state government departments and strongly emphasised that, once these bodies begin to operate, the government should withdraw from the field and reserve its role only to guidance, supervision and higher planning.[37] In other words, the report visualised the local bodies, especially the panchayat samiti, to be substitute agencies for direct governmental operations and recommended that the government should act only through the agency of these bodies.[38] This line of thinking which regards the local bodies as agents of the state government clearly runs through the report[39] and is in keeping with the point of view expressed by the Planning Commission.

The foregoing analysis reveals three main features of panchayati raj bodies as envisaged by the Balwantray Mehta Committee Report. They are local in character, have official authority, and are to act as agents of the government. Of these three features the last two deserve special attention, since they clearly highlight the fact that all the three panchayati raj bodies are to function as official agencies in lieu or in absence or in extension of the state government machinery and hence their line or direction of working would broadly be similar to that of the State and the Central Governments. Since these bodies are to be staffed with government officials and to be financed from the state exchequer accord-

36. The report, in fact, provided for government officials to act as chairmen of panchayat samiti and zila parishad. This recommendation was however disregarded by Rajasthan Government. All other states have also stipulated non-officials to be the chairmen of these institutions.

37. *cf.* The observation of the report: 'If this body is to function with any vigour, initiative and success, the government will have to devolve upon it all its own functions in these fields within the body's jurisdiction reserving to itself the functions of guidance, supervision and higher planning; and, where necessary, providing extra finance'. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

38. Speaking about panchayat samiti, the report observed: 'This body can function effectively, only if it is the sole authority for all those development programmes which are of exclusive interest for the area. In such matters the state government will cease to operate within the area and in special circumstances when it has to do so through the agency of this local body.' p. 6

39. 'It (the panchayat samiti) will act as the agent of the state government in executing any special schemes of development or other activities in which the state government might like to delegate its power to this local authority.' *Ibid.*, p. 11.

ing to a schematic budget, their day-to day operation would necessarily remain confined to the policies of the State and the Central governments

This should not be taken to imply a total lack of operational flexibility Indeed, the local bodies will have a large degree of autonomy' in their respective fields However, the mere fact that these bodies will have to act as a link in the official hierarchy, running from the panchayat to the state government and upward, will ensure that they do not cross or over-reach the policy-lines framed at the state level, that is, by the Legislative Assembly The Legislative Assembly being the supreme policy making body at the state level, the role of various executive organs of government would remain limited to implementation and execution of these policies

A very significant conclusion emerges out of these two points, namely, that the various panchayati raj bodies are expected to function according to and work within the general policy framework laid down at the state level by the Legislative Assembly and that their operational autonomy is circumscribed by the policy-decisions made through a direct people-to legislature channel which more or less by-passes the panchayati raj structure Of course, these bodies do play a vital part in the decision-making process but their participation in the process is indirect and narrow and, at times, even absent in most of the decisions arrived at the state level

The purpose of the foregoing analysis is to distinguish the character of gram sabha from the three tiers of panchayati raj and to bring out the point that gram sabha as it obtains in practice, differs sharply from other local bodies and, to some extent, is incompatible with the present structural pattern of panchayati raj It was perhaps an awareness of the difference in the nature of gram sabha as compared to the three-tier structure of panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad that precluded the Balwantray Mehta Committee from making any concrete suggestions for the establishment of active gram sabhas

The Statutory Base

Gram sabha was accorded statutory recognition in Rajasthan simultaneously with the introduction of democratic decentralisation through an amendment in the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953

which now forms section 23 A of the Act. It reads as follows.

"(1) Every panchayat shall convene, in such manner and at such times and intervals as may be prescribed, a meeting of all adult residents of the panchayat circle.

"(2) At such meetings the programmes and works undertaken by the panchayat and their progress shall be explained and the view of the residents thereon shall be reported to the panchayat at its next meeting."

It is interesting to note that the Act or its rules do not use the term 'gram sabha' but refer only to the 'meeting of adult residents' which has now come to be known as 'gram sabha.'

The Rajasthan Government has also framed rules for gram sabha meetings. These are summarised in Appendix E. A perusal of the rules pertaining to the organisation of gram sabha throws light on its nature. It is defined as 'general meetings of all the adult residents of the panchayat circle' and its main function is to obtain people's reaction to panchayat budget and provide them a forum for reviewing periodically the progress of development works. Gram sabha is constituted as an open forum for all adult citizens to express their views on panchayat activities.

Provision has been made to enable the adult residents to call special gram sabha meetings at their own initiative and to discuss some problems which they feel require immediate attention. By making it obligatory on the part of the presiding officer to submit minutes of the proceedings of gram sabha meetings at the panchayat meetings, a liaison has also been established between the gram sabha and the panchayat.

The responsibility for convening gram sabhas is placed on the panchayat (acting through the sarpanch or the up-sarpanch). Panchayat samiti and zila parishad are completely kept out of the picture. Moreover, no specific provisions about attendance have been laid down even for panchas, let alone for block level and district level functionaries. Finally, no specific provision has been made for making it compulsory on the part of panchayat to implement the decisions taken by the gram sabha or to act according to the views expressed at its meetings.

Gram Sabha Meeting

The Rajasthan Government has been stressing the importance

of gram sabha since the inception of panchayati raj The Development Department has also been continuously trying to encourage and strengthen this institution Zila parishads and panchayat samitis have also been enjoined by the Department to promote gram sabha meetings in their respective areas

Every year the gram sabha cycle starts from the zila parishad where the District Development Officer or the pramukh stresses upon the members (especially the pradhans of panchayat samitis) the utility and necessity of organising gram sabha meetings The message is further reinforced in the panchayat samiti meetings, especially those held in March-April and August-September The panchayat samiti usually urges the sarpanchas to call gram sabha meetings in their panchayats and also tries to formulate a tentative time table

However, in practice, it was found that some of the gram sabha meetings were called without prior notice In many cases, the notice given was very short The panchayat samiti staff therefore found it difficult to attend such meetings, particularly when the panchayat samiti was not informed about the gram sabha programme The following extract from a circular which was sent to all panchayats by the panchayat samiti illustrates the point

> Gram sabha has a special importance in the panchayati raj set up But some panchayats are not careful about their duties in this regard Every panchayat has an obligation to call the meetings of gram sabha at least twice a year But this is not being done in some panchayats and, in such cases where the gram sabha is called, the panchayat samiti office is not even informed of its programme

In most cases however the panchayat samiti was informed about the date and timing of gram sabhas Apart from fixing the time schedule of gram sabhas the panchayat samiti has to give positive assistance to the sarpanchas in their effort to call gram sabha meetings This assistance takes the form of making provision for hurricane lanterns or mats arranging cinema shows and persuading the block officials and the pradhan to attend such meetings

Gram sabhas are usually held in the panchayat headquarter village, at a suitable place where a large number of people could be accommodated A gram sabha usually commences after the

sunset and continues till late evening hours. Generally, the sarpanch and other members of the panchayat are present together with the panchayat clerk. The block officials also make it a point to attend the meeting. Sometimes the pradhan is also present. Other village functionaries such as the village level worker, school teachers, *vaidyas* etc. are also present.

The sarpanch presides over the gram sabha meetings and the proceedings include presentation of panchayat budget and a review of the progress report prepared by the panchayat secretary or, in some cases, by the extension officers. Towards the end, the members of gram sabha are usually given an opportunity to express their views on any problem or to ask any question regarding the working of the panchayat. These meetings are very often followed by a film show in which documentaries and, sometimes, full length feature films are shown. Sometimes other means of entertainment such as exhibitions are also provided.

Regularity of Meetings

The zila parishad and the three panchayat samitis which we studied always made special efforts to organise gram sabha meetings in every panchayat circle. But, despite their best efforts, very few panchayats were able to convene two gram sabha meetings a year. Even when the meetings were arranged they either proved to be abortive or were unsuccessful, since very few adults turned up at these meetings. It was observed by one of our research officers that: 'The minimum number of meetings statutorily required does not take place in some panchayats. A number of panchayats fail to convene one or both meetings. In a few cases these were mere observance of a formality'. The same was the observation of another research officer. According to him, 'panchayats do not care about the statutory provision regarding organisation of gram sabhas with the result that very few (almost negligible) meetings were held in the past'.

In 1961 an all-out campaign was launched to vitalise the institution of gram sabha. As a result of constant reminders and keen interest, some improvement has now taken place. Excepting 2 of the 17 panchayats which we studied, all had thus held such meetings.

Fixation of Gram Sabha Meetings

As mentioned earlier, panchayat samiti fixes the time table of gram sabha meetings in consultation with the sarpanchas. The sarpanchas however enjoy good deal of discretion in so far as fixation of date and timing of these meetings are concerned. It was observed that the sarpanch generally fixed the date of a meeting according to his convenience. The matter was seldom discussed in panchayat meetings; it was rarely put on its agenda.

Media of Announcement

Once the date and time of gram sabha meetings are fixed, these are announced through one or more of the following media.

Informing the panchas and requesting them to bring as many persons as possible: One of our research officers reported that 'the number of panchas attending the panchayat being usually very low, the message moves very slowly and does not reach all the people concerned with it'.

Affixing printed notice : This method is also not very effective. One of our research officers thus reported that 'usually the notices are on a small paper of the size of a school exercise book which do not catch the eye easily. In the first place, it is very difficult to notice such a paper pasted on a place not carefully selected. Secondly, it is difficult to read it because of its smallness'. The high proportion of rural illiteracy is another factor limiting the effectiveness of this medium.

Through beat of drum : This is statutorily provided which, according to one of our research officers, 'is the most effective method of informing the villagers about the programme of a gram sabha....wherever this method is followed, the attendance is invariably large.' However, from the reports of two other research officers, it appears that this method was rarely employed. On enquiring as to why this was so, most sarpanchas replied that there were no arrangement in their villoge for the beat of drum. Thus one of the most effective methods was ignored.

Through panchayat peon : The panchayat peon in one of the panchayat samitis under study was also, at times, asked to make the necessary announcements.

Through gram balai : Sometimes the gram balais (traditional rural messengers) were asked to inform the people about the gram sabha meetings. Since however they were not adequately paid for their services, they usually confined their publicity activity to their village of residence.

Through official functionaries like the V.L.Ws and school teachers : In a general way all rural functionaries were asked to inform the people about the gram sabha meetings. The technique is however so vague and imprecise that not much good has so far resulted from it.

In short, it can be concluded that the gram sabha meetings are inadequately publicised and whatever little publicity is conducted it remains confined only to the village where the panchayat office is situated or where the sarpanch resides.

Attendance

The attendance at gram sabha meetings is generally very low. Apart from official functionaries, there are only a few villagers. One of our research officers reported that in 1962 the average attendance in his area of survey was 200 while another found it to be only 25 in the 11 gram sabhas which he studied; the maximum being 45. It was a common experience of the research officers that when they went to attend a gram sabha meeting they found hardly a dozen people including the sarpanch present there. A few panchas and a couple of block officials were found to be discussing various matters and waiting for 3 to 4 hours for the people to come and then dispersing. This is what one of our research officers reported : 'We had heard a great deal about the organisation of a gram sabha meeting at.........This is the nearest panchayat to the panchayat samiti headquarters. Almost all extension officers reported themselves for the meeting but with six villagers present in the meeting it turned out to be abortive.' Similar was the observation of another research officer who in one case found only the sarpanch, panchayat clerk, village level worker, school teachers, three panchas and a group of 15 persons present at the place of meeting, gossiping till 12 P.M. and dispersing thereafter without any meeting.

All the three research officers reported that only a few women were present at the gram sabha meetings. Apart from the traditional backwardness of village women, the total absence of women

from gram sabha meetings can perhaps be attributed to the timing of these meeting which were usually held from 6 P M to midnight, though nearly the same was the case even when gram sabhas were held during day-time (mid-noon of afternoon) It can therefore be said that village women have not yet become as articulate as to feel interested in gram sabha meetings This should not distress social scientists who must know that interest and participation in political affairs on the part of village women could be expected almost at the last lap of social change in rural India Quite a few intermediary stages still need to be crossed to reach this stage of political articulation

Most of the people attending a gram sabha belonged to the village where such a meeting was held All the three research officers have repeatedly emphasised this point Gram sabha meetings are thus usually unrepresentative in character in as much as people belonging to all the villages in the panchayat circle seldom take part in them This is a problem which has to be tackled before gram sabhas could be expected to become true and really representative institutions of the people

The People Who Usually Attend

Depending on its venue and timing the composition of a gram sabha meeting varies from one place to another[40] Usually the prominent residents of the village and the traditional leaders are present One of our research officers reports that usually the persons attending gram sabha meetings are those who are influential in the village and those others who want to use the opportunity to approach the visiting officials to talk about their individual problems such as *tacqqavi*, grants, recovery of loans, etc In the two other panchayat samitis also only the rural elite attended these meetings[41]

Among the non official functionaries the pradhans attend very few gram sabha meetings In one of the panchayat samitis how ever the pradhan displayed a keen interest in the institution of gram sabha and attended as many as 8 of the 12 meetings held The pradhans in the two other panchayat samitis were not so

40 Some idea about the composition of gram sabha and the functionaries normally present at gram sabha meetings can be had from Appendix 2

41 Detailed analysis of the political and socio economic characteristics of gram sabha attendance could not however be attempted

regular. Other members of panchayat samiti—sarpanchas belonging to other panchayats—were almost never present. It is an interesting feature of some gram sabhas that, at times, the sarpanchas who called the meetings were themselves absent. The research officers have reported many instances of sarpanchas leaving the village intentionally and deliberately on the day gram sabhas were to be held. Citing a specific instance one of our research officers commented that 'the sarpanch fixed the date of the meeting and then absented himself from the appointed place and made no efforts to convene the meeting, apart from fixing its date.' In a majority of cases this denotes the fact that the sarpanch only wants to comply with a formality and is not genuinely interested in calling the gram sabha. His absence is rather serious since it only deprives the meeting of its worth. Generally, however, the sarpanchas attended the gram sabha meetings once these were fixed, and duly played their role of presiding officers.

The panchas as a whole are expected to be present at gram sabha meetings but in actual practice only a fraction of them are present. According to one of our research officers no meeting could be held at....since only 3 persons, besides the up-sarpanch and the panchayat secretary, turned up at the appointed hour. Another research officer pointed out that at a gram sabha meeting in his area no panch was present at all.

Among the block officials the vikas adhikari has an important role to play at gram sabha meetings. In all the three panchayat samitis the vikas adhikaris took a keen interest in gram sabha meetings and attended most of them. Together with the vikas adhikaris, the extension officers also attend these gram sabhas. But the entire block team does not attend each and every gram sabha. Usually only one or two extension officers attend a gram sabha and it is only in the case of gram sabhas of exceptional interest that the entire block team participates. This is proper also because it is neither possible nor necessary for the entire block team to be present.

The Time For Gram Sabha

Gram sabhas usually commence after sun-set, often after 9 P.M., and continue well past midnight. The venue of the meeting is well set and is usually lit by petromax lanterns. The presiding

officer, the main functionaries and the visiting dignatories sit on a raised dias, while others sit on carpets (*dari*) on the ground The research officers have reported instances of gram sabhas being fixed for the afternoon and even noon Such gram sabhas fail to draw even half a dozen people and, in fact, are fixed at such inconvenient hours mainly to bring about such a result One of our research officers has observed in this regard "Quite unusual and unheard of, the meeting was called at midday The population of... belongs to the working class, a majority working in mills and factories and in minor and smaller workshops The sarpanch was by no means ignorant of this fact and yet he chose to call a meeting of the gram sabha at midday not without a motive of mischief... The sarpanch deliberately wanted to avoid such an occasion for public scrutiny of the conduct of his panchayat " Another research officer reports a similar case of a gram sabha, scheduled to be held at 12 noon, drew only five villagers besides the officials and non official functionaries and had to be abandoned He found one gram sabha even during the day to be successful as the issues for discussion were fairly lively This, however, should be treated more as an exception than a rule

Feast and Entertainment

To encourage a large number of people to attend the gram sabha meetings, the panchayats usually arrange for a feast At least some kind of drinks and sweets etc , are served One of our research officers has highlighted this point and has observed that at many places there are lavish arrangements for grand feasts while at some others only a glass of drinks ('sherbat or lassi) is served Usually the sarpanch or some other prominent residents of the area arrange for the meals for the vikas adhikari and other visiting officials and V I Ps The meals are usually served only to the official functionaries, the other people arrive after taking their evening meals The feasts, to a large extent, are an essential ingredient of a successful gram sabha as, otherwise, the block officials find it very difficult to attend gram sabha meetings, which continue till late in the night, after a full day's work at the samiti office Sometimes a party of officers arrives early in the day to make preparations for the gram sabha and it becomes an act of courtesy on the part of the sarpanch and others to offer them lunch and dinner

The main attraction of the gram sabha for the common people

is the cinema show and records of film songs. Often when the people hear about a gram sabha they ask whether there is going to be a film show. Our research officer has emphasised strongly the appeal of the film-show which draws a large crowd, including many children, who come only for its sake. However, it must be pointed out that all gram sabhas cannot and do not have the advantage of a film show and recorded music that goes with it because meetings are held in remote places and the number of cinema vans is limited. A panchayat samiti which is very near the district headquarters of Jaipur can get this facility more often than the far off panchayat samitis. It would thus be misleading to conclude that a film show is essential for all gram sabha meetings. Film shows are not a regular feature of the gram sabhas everywhere; many large and well attended gram sabhas have been organised in far flung areas and the people there have directly concentrated on serious problems without a session of fun, film shows and gramophone records. This has been true of two of the three panchayat samitis that we have studied. One of our research officers has given detailed accounts of rather well-attended gram sabhas which have discussed common local problems, such as, construction of schools and wells, provision of health centres, of grazing lands etc., for several hours extending well past midnight without the attraction of film shows.

It can thus be concluded that the provision of films is a popular attraction and it helps in considerably swelling the attendance but it is not a necessary pre-requisite for the success of a gram sabha. There is considerable evidence to suggest that the villagers are interested in the proceedings of the gram sabha *per se*, especially if the agenda for the meetings has certain controversial or useful items which arouse keen interest all over the panchayat. The fact that at least in three gram sabhas out of a total of twelve people used to the attraction of the cinema show were keenly interested in discussion is a matter of great significance.

The Procedure of Work

With regard to the actual proceedings and the procedural details of the gram sabha meetings, there are no statutory provisions and each gram sabha has been left to evolve its own pattern. As a result the gram sabha meetings are conducted by the presiding officer in a manner he deems suitable with the help

of the official functionaries. The constant stress by political leaders and officials on the theme that the gram sabha is the village parliament has had a considerable impact on the procedures at the gram sabha meetings. These are usually conducted on the premise that the sarpanch and his fellow-panchas are responsible to the residents of the panchayat circle in the same manner as the cabinet (state or central) is responsible to the legislature. Efforts are being made to develop a relationship between the panchayat and the gram sabha on a pattern similar to that which obtains between the executive and the legislature in a parliamentary democracy. This is emphasised not only in the speeches of the political leaders but almost at every gram sabha even by the sarpanch, the vikas adhikari or some other visiting dignitaries. This will be borne out by the translated version of the extracts taken from the opening address of sarpanch at one of the gram sabhas:

> It is essential in a democratic system of government that the government of the people must be conducted by and for the people. Since this system of government is based on elections the people are sovereign. Thus in such a system it is essential that we, the elected representatives, place before everybody our achievements and programmes. If anybody notes anything peculiar in them, it must be brought to our notice. This is the aim with which the gram sabha meetings are called.

Since the relationship between the panchayat and the gram sabha is being visualised as that between the executive and legislature, the gram sabha meetings are conducted on the general parliamentary pattern and the presiding officer is given the freedom of fixing the agenda, taking up of various items for discussion, applying closure to protracted discussions, allowing questions, keeping the minutes and maintaining peace and discipline in the meeting. The people who assemble at the gram sabha meetings have little control over these matters though, if they are adamant, they can make the presiding officer function according to their wishes. However it was found in most of the gram sabhas attended by the research officers that a large majority of the people were content with playing a passive role leaving it to the presiding officer to conduct the meeting as he liked. There were few demands for inclusion of additional items in the agenda and extension of time for discussion of a particular item. At almost all the meetings the presiding officer had no difficulty

in maintaining peace and order though the instance of a gram sabha meeting becoming rowdy has also been reported. One of our research officers has reported such a scene from a gram sabha held at the headquarters village of the panchayat samiti where the members were divided into hostile groups. In the words of the research officer : "Both these groups exchanged bitter, hot words and were about to reach the stage of a hand-to-hand fight. The meeting disbursed at this point and the panchayat clerk took shelter in a nearby house.....Though later efforts were made to reconvene the meeting these were of no avail and the gram sabha came to an unhappy and irresponsible end." This is, however, the only such case reported and this much disorder could prevail mainly because the sarpanch was absent and the issue on which the groups were embittered was serious.[42]

In general gram sabha meetings are conducted peacefully and, as the research officers have indicated, resemble well-oiled clockwork. One event follows the other and items are taken up one after another without any objections or opposition. The entire proceedings are conducted without a hitch or hindrance from any quarter. This is partly because the collective presence of so many rural functionaries and officials is still a rather overawing novelty for most of the villagers. With the vikas adhikari and the extension officers sitting round the sarpanch and sometimes together with revenue and police officials, the people at a gram sabha naturally want to put up a good show and exhibit their best manners. The attitude of the villagers at a gram sabha is a composite mixture of instinctive deference to authority and an intentional desire to please the powers-that-be. Thus nobody in the gram sabha wants to stand out as a non-conformist, ask awkward questions or stubbornly insist on prolonging a discussion if the sarpanch or vikas adhikari wants it to be finished.

As all the three research officers have pointed out no agenda is usually fixed or announced for a gram sabha and the meetings are generally conducted without any prearranged plan. There are a few items which always form a part of all the gram sabhas. Besides this the new items and details of the agenda depend on the ingenuity of the sarpanch or the vikas adhikari and the initiative of the people attending the meeting. Sometimes a general announcement is made about the topics likely to be dis-

42. The details of this gram sabha meeting are given elsewhere.

cussed. Generally however publicity is confined to the time and place of the gram sabha meeting.

The gram sabha meetings are normally conducted without the help of any mechanical appliances like loudspeakers as face-to-face contacts are possible in small gatherings like this. However, in some cases loudspeaker arrangements are also made. Though this results in a wider coverage it has certain disadvantages also. The presence of a microphone—normally with only one mouth-piece—means that only one person can speak at a time. Usually the sarpanch keeps the mouth-piece in his hands. When some extension officer or the vikas adhikari or some friendly panch wants to use it the mouth-piece is passed on. There have been cases where the sarpanch refused to hand over the mike to a person whom he regarded as hostile or inimical. Since the sarpanch wields the mike he can drown any protesting voice and deny the free interplay of opinions and views so essential at a gram sabha. It has also been noted that the villagers are a little hesitant and unaccustomed to come up to the sarpanch and ask questions on the mike. Many villagers express a preference to ask questions standing at the place he is occupying and readily forego the use of mike as it means walking up to the dias with all the eyes focussed on them. In a group of persons most of whom are well-known to each other and to whom the use of microphone is new this is rather an ordeal and many questions are never put because the questioner cannot summon the necessary courage to go through it.

Finally, though most gram sabhas follow a peaceful course it does not mean that all the participants pay equally keen attention to its proceedings. Generally, most of the people are content with sitting quietly and paying little attention to the discussions. As a general rule those in the first few rows pay special attention to the deliberations while those in the rear are busy gossiping in small groups. Sometimes their murmurs reach such a high pitch that the presiding officer has to call them to silence. A hush falls on the meeting for a short time and once again the whispers and murmurs start. The audience hardly ever listens with rapt attention to what is being said unless the speaker happens to be a V.I.P., when they cannot afford to talk. Children always collect in great numbers in expectation of a film show and are a source of distraction. They have to be constantly rebuked to keep quiet.

This account tries to present a living image of the gram sabha as seen through the eyes of three research officers and supplemented by the Deputy Director's personal observations. It also attempts to portray the atmosphere prevailing in a body composed primarily of villagers with no experience of managing the affairs of their own assemblies and who are being consciously introduced (and induced) to the task. It is no wonder therefore that they are a timid people groping and hesitating to stretch out their hands; it is not surprising to find them idly toying with the rope-reins not knowing how to manipulate them. What is heartening however is that some of them are making serious efforts to learn the skills used in handling the reins of government. Once they "learn the ropes" a safe and successful journey may not be very difficult for them.

The Functioning of Gram Sabha

The gram sabha meetings as indicated earlier seldom follow a preplanned and well-publicised agenda. A wide variety of topics and issues are taken up for discussion. But there are certain items which by convention are always there at every gram sabha meeting. The statutorily prescribed function of the gram sabha is to provide a forum for all the adult residents of a panchayat circle to express their views on the work programme undertaken by the panchayat. This is usually done by placing before the people an annual progress report of the panchayat together with the annual budget and the audit report, if it is available. These are the three main items taken up for discussion at every gram sabha. To these are added miscellaneous subjects like preparation of village production plans, formulation of village plans, fixation of targets and so on. Finally, there are certain other functions, such as dissemination of information on various activities pertaining to planned development and panchayati raj, which also are taken up.

In the usual absence of a formal agenda the gram sabha is free to discuss any topic which the people want. On many occasions items of local interest are discussed at length while the budget and the progress report are paid only cursory attention. This happens especially when some extraordinary events have taken place and the people have come to the gram sabha with the intention of drawing up a common plan of action. The gram sabha meetings are frequently drawn into controversial discussions regarding local

affairs which have little to do with development and which lie outside the scope of the panchayats For example, one of the most discussed problems at gram sabhas relates to trespassing and unauthorised possession of grazing lands or other problems relating to land about which the panchayat is incompetent to take any action beyond transmitting the people's plea to higher authorities In a general way the gram sabha is able to take up for discussion almost any problem of local interest (from collection of funds for building a school to ordering destruction of the crops of illegal occupants or tenants of panchayat grazing land) and is not confined to panchayat activities or development programmes only

Usual Items on the Agenda

As stated above, the main items usually included in the actual agenda of a gram sabha meeting are

1 *General Review of Progress* At each gram sabha meeting the sarpanch or the panchayat clerk reads out a progress report giving detailed information about the panchayat and panchayat activities The progress report is sometimes presented as an annual report and contains details about the panchayat's davelopmental achievements and programmes The report especially highlights the development works undertaken by the panchayats and indicates the plans and targets for the ensuing period The report also includes the annual budget of the panchayats giving estimates about the income and expenditure

The report is not of the same quality everywhere At some gram sabhas a long and detailed report running into a dozen typed pages is read out while at other places it is substituted by a short speech by the sarpanch

The report is usually first read out in full by the sarpanch or the clerk and then the people's comments and queries are invited The experience of one of our research officers has been different with useful results In his case various items in the report were taken up one by one for discussion This type of discussion could elicit better response The usual pattern of reading the report as a whole elicits no response and the people generally express agreement with the report even if they had not heard or understood it completely The report does not generally produce any contro versial discussion, only some specific points are taken up for further consideration The progress report seldom figures in dis-

cussion and it is very rare for any body to seek a clarification, elaboration or explanation with regard to the facts and figures about the achievement of the targets or the general progress of developmental activities. There is hardly any inclination among the people to subject the announced achievements to a careful scrutiny or close checking. Similarly, the targets and objectives for the forthcoming period are usually agreed to without much discussion or examination. Even if certain targets appear high or low they are subjected virtually to no criticism.

The development plans for the future, such as, construction of school buildings, panchayat ghar, ayurvedic dispensary etc., are however thoroughly discussed. In fact the gram sabha is utilised as a suitable forum for enlisting people's participation in such projects. This forms the main business at gram sabha meetings and most of the speeches are devoted to appealing to the people to come forward and contribute (in cash or in labour) towards local development works like laying out of parks and construction of schools and libraries. Hence it is at a gram sabha meeting that one can clearly judge the rural people's sense of priorities in terms of intentions and motives in participation and non-participation in local schemes which are calculated to be beneficial for them. For example, one of our research officers has reported that at a gram sabha in his area the question of obtaining people's participation for six different schemes was raised. The people gave enthusiastic response to only one or two. Among the schemes for which the people refused to contribute anything one related to the construction of urinals for the convenience of bus passengers at the stand. The people at the gram sabha raised doubts about the utility of such urinals as far as villagers were concerned making exception for people running shops near the bus stand. They refused therefore to contribute a single pie for this purpose. Similarly the people failed to realise the necessity of a public park and refused to contribute anything towards its expenses. They suggested instead that Rs. 400 granted by the panchayat samiti for the purpose be handed over to a middle school which would lay out a garden. When items relating to a girl's primary school and a higher secondary school came up for discussion. the people at the same gram sabha showed a keen desire to contribute as much as they could. It must be noted that they were still depending on the panchayat or panchayat samiti to defray a large part of the expenses in

this connection but were willing to (and had, in fact, already collected) contribute partially towards the total expenditure. It is heartening to note that villagers have a sense of priorities which in some cases is more convincing than that of the panchayat samiti.

The development plans of the panchayats which are also placed before the gram sabha always evoke a keen discussion. Frequently even trenchent criticisms of the panchayat's activities are voiced. But whatever the criticism or opposition the schemes or projects recommended by the panchayat are seldom revised. Even if revision takes place it is confined to minor alterations and it is rare for a scheme to be completely rejected and dropped. The people generally limit their role to offering general criticism. Charges of corruption and inefficiency are also sometimes brought against the sarpanchas and other functionaries. This however seldom leads to cancellation of a scheme since no specific opposition is offered and thus the panchayat progress report is finally approved in full. There is a significant point to be noted here that since the gram sabha is by statute supposed to delimit its function to recording people's views and opinions about the panchayat and development activities, it is powerless to suggest or order any changes or cuts in the panchayat scheme. As the people who attend gram sabha meetings are most often aware of this limitation a few among them always try to wrest the opportunity to indulge in criticism and propaganda knowing very well that the gram sabha can play no effective role. The real factor behind the barrage of criticism that at times even degenerates into a mud slinging campaign is village factionalism. At almost every gram sabha the people are divided into two groups. The group which has no share in the power and is in a minority position tries to heap ridicules and abuses on the group whose members are in power. This tussle is mild in most of the gram sabhas and explosive just in a small number of them. Not many instances of tussle have in fact been reported. One of our research officers has given two instances where tempers became frayed and the gram sabha degenerated into the field for a hand-to-hand fight. In one case troublemakers were a few cultivators who had been declared trespassers of panchayat grazing land and whose crops had been destroyed under orders of the panchayat. The research officer has further noted that although the number of such illegal cultivators was

large such punishment was meted out to only a few and the rest continued to hold on to their unauthorised cultivation. This naturally led to great resentment and the consensus at the gram sabha was that no partiality should have been shown in destroying the crops of illegal cultivators. The situation became tense with supporters of both the groups exchanging bitter words and in the end hand-to-hand fighting broke out. It may again be stressed even at the risk of repetition that the situation is not so bad in all gram sabhas most of which are conducted peacefully and in which the views of the opposition are expressed in a frank and forthright but sober manner. Whatever might be the degree or range of opposition and conflict at a gram sabha meeting it is seldom that constructive suggestions are put forward to supplement or strengthen the development projects undertaken by the panchayat.

2. *The panchayat annual budget :* The panchayat annual budget is presented at the meeting held in May but it seldom evokes a serious discussion except with regard to taxation proposals. At almost all the gram sabha meetings where people's comments about levy of taxes have been invited they have reacted adversely. This is almost a universal phenomenon. In none of the gram sabha meetings attended by research officers did the people wholeheartedly welcome or approve taxation proposals though most often they were persuaded to accept them. The idea of the community tax was specially sponsored by the sarpanch or the vikas adhikari at many gram sabhas but the people seemed reluctant to bear the burden of taxation. One of our research officers is of the opinion that in spite of generally adverse reaction a gram sabha can be used as a forum to prevail upon the people to get over their aversion to being taxed. He has given some convincing statistics in this regard (Table XXV).

3. *Audit reports of panchayat accounts :* At some gram sabha meetings the audit report of the panchayat accounts prepared by the local audit department is also placed before the people. But this is not a usual practice especially because latest audit reports are seldom available in the case of most of the panchayats. In fact one of the most frequent demands at gram sabha meetings is that the gram sabha must be told about the audit report and the objections raised by it. One of our research officers reported that a scrutiny of the panchayat accounts at a gram sabha revealed that the sarpanch and two other panchas owed as much as Rs. 250

Table XXV

No.	Name of the gram sabha	Decision on the tax proposal
1.	'R'	Passed unanimously
2.	'B'	" "
3.	'Th'	Passed after heated discussion and some modifications
4.	'D'	Passed after long discussion with many modifications
5.	'N'	Rejected
6.	'De'	"
7.	'Ch'	"

to the panchayat. The sum which should have been paid to the panchayat samiti had actually been misappropriated. Similar irregularities were brought to light at other gram sabhas and in many cases the sarpanchas refused to throw open the panchayat accounts for inspection and discussion. In the absence of any statutory provisions the sarpanchas are within their rights and the people have no means to secure the presentation of panchayat accounts and audit reports at gram sabha meetings. It has also been noted that at times the panchayat accounts are presented and approved without any discussion. This has been especially the experience of one of our research officers who reports :

> "So far there has been only one case in which the details of the accounts were asked for, questioned and discussed...With this exception the accounts in every case have been unquestioningly accepted without any discussion."

4. *Local area plans :* One of the main roles assigned to gram sabha in the scheme of planning from below in Rajasthan relates to the discussion and finalisation of local area plans to be put together to form the state five-year plan. The gram sabhas are thus expected to discuss the panchayat five-year plans and the views on them are supposed to guide the planning process starting from the panchayat and going upwards to the state level. In actual practice the gram sabhas have not been able to play any

significant role in this sphere. In the district under our study very few gram sabhas can be said to have contributed anything to the planning process. Even the panchayats were not given adequate notice at the time of the formulation of the state third five-year plan and the gram sabhas hardly came into the picture at any stage. In a very general way the topic was discussed at subsequent gram sabhas but as a whole these were unable to play any useful role. Not only this. The gram sabhas have not been very successful in the preparation of village production plans either in which every resident of a village is supposed to have some share. In none of the gram sabhas attended by us the topic was ever discussed nor did the people show any enthusiasm for the speedy preparation of such plans.

Gram Sabhas as Clearing House of Ideas

The gram sabha meetings are always utilised as a convenient meeting place for the officials and non-officials. Most of the time is devoted to side activities which include ventilation of people's grievances regarding administrative delays and dissemination of information about various issues of public importance by the official functionaries at the gram sabha meetings. The person in charge of the primary health centre might take up half an hour to inform the people about vaccination facilities and point out the utility of preventive measures. Similarly the industries extension officer might tell the people about the industries that they could start. The vikas adhikari and the pradhan also usually have a number of announcements to make. Many agencies like the Khadi Gramodyog Commission or the L.I.C. also send their schemes. There are usually a number of speeches from the sarpanch, the vikas adhikari and from any other visiting dignitary. They take up quite a bit of the total time.

A new dimension to the activities of the gram sabha was added when an attempt was made to raise funds for national defence in the wake of emergency and to enlist people for the village volunteer force.

Gram Sabha as a Forum of Criticism

As pointed out already the progress report, the budget and the development plans are all read through hurriedly and the people are given little time for understanding their implication.

Of course, at the end, it is customary to ask the people to put questions but in practice very few people avail themselves of this opportunity Most of them remain passive spectators with only a handful of persons putting questions These usually are in general terms and seldom refer to any specific items covered by the reports The tendency of general criticism is one of the main features of the gram sabha meetings where the people usually ignore the panchayat and concentrate their attack on the working of the government as a whole The people attending the gram sabha meeting regard it as an appropriate forum to vent their feelings about any government department and the discussion of panchayat affairs is relegated to the background One of our research officers reported "Discussions at gram sabhas are usually initiated when some complaints concerning the working of government are raised The gram sabha reviews more the *working of government than that of the panchayat*" He adds that "state roadways, forest rangers, irrigation, revenue (*patwari*), police department, taxation, grazing lands, primary schools, all aspects of agriculture, untouchability and other social reforms, courts and justice—in fact, anything—can come under the range of gram sabha discussions" [43]

Record of Proceedings

Another significant aspect about the working of the gram sabhas is that, despite statutory provisions, the proceedings of the gram sabha meetings are seldom properly recorded and reported to the panchayat and panchayat samiti Noting this deficiency one of our research officers reported that "proceedings of the gram sabha are not reported to the panchayat and the panchayat samiti and consequently no action can be taken" He adds that "even in cases where the reports reach the panchayat samiti practically *no action is taken* ...The reports of gram sabhas are not scrutinised and the subject matter is not placed before the authorities concerned" Thus the gram sabha deliberations and discussions remain confined to the meeting Though the minutes are presented to the panchayat it is not always done in a regular manner The panchayats and the panchayat samitis do not follow up the gram sabha decisions

43 A similar variety has been noted by two other research officers both of whom have confirmed the opinion that the gram sabha discusses *anything but the* specific panchayat report

The Summing Up

It may be worthwhile to bring together the more important findings of our empirical enquiry as follows:

Findings

1. The gram sabha today turns out to be a loosely organised meeting of a handful of persons who talk amongst themselves about many general topics and whose discussions and decisions are given scant attention by higher bodies. Since the gram sabha has no authority or machinery to enforce its decisions it remains only a picturesque formality for the official and non-official functionaries.

2. The gram sabhas are organised without enough advanced publicity and they do not have a fixed agenda.

3. The attendance is poor and only people from the village where the gram sabha is held are present. Even official functionaries and non-officials like the sarpanch and panchas are often absent.

4. The gram sabha meetings last for two or three hours most of which is spent in speech making and report reading. The time available for the discussion of panchayat affairs normally is less than an hour. A wide variety of subjects and issues are discussed in such a short period. It may be noted that normally the panchayat affairs are ignored in the discussion while the general working of government departments is at times reviewed at length. The members display little interest in the proceedings and seldom ask questions. The people hardly give constructive suggestions for improving the working of the panchayats but are more interested in complaining about the faults and inefficiency of government departments. There is no doubt that at every gram sabha meeting there is a small minority of earnest citizens who take a serious interest in the proccedings and who pay special attention to the development projects and targets set out by the panchayat. Even these few persons are overawed by the presence of a large number of officials and non-officials. It is very seldom that they muster enough courage to ask questions or seek clarifications. Usually the people remain silent spectators and approve whatever reports or accounts are submitted by the sarpanch.

5. The procedure usually adopted for conducting the gram

sabha meetings further discourages discussion and close scrutiny A fairly lengthy annual report covering several items is read for about an hour The villagers are then asked to put questions and comment on the report as a whole This reduces the whole affair to a ritual

6 While most of the gram sabhas follow a mechanical schedule the proceedings are vitiated in a few cases by factionalism which creates mutual hostility and tension preventing any serious discussion of the real problems Not many such cases have however been reported

7 Whatever might be the decision of the gram sabha at its meetings they are not recorded properly and seldom result in any effective action

To conclude the gram sabha, as it obtains today, cannot fit in the three-tier structure of the panchayati raj consisting of three bodies with statutory status, powers and functions acting more or less as agencies of the government.

Suggestions

It is obvious that the gram sabha is yet to find its foot as a political institution and serious efforts should be made to put the institution on a sound footing It is with this end in view that the following suggestions are being offered

1 *The role of gram sabha* The first step involved in the process of vitalising the gram sabha is to envisage its role clearly and realistically The main point at issue is whether the gram sabha should be organised as a consultative body or a deliberative body or a deliberative-cum executive body Let us examine these three alternatives in reverse order here (i) If the gram sabha is to act as a deliberative cum executive body the obvious implication is that it should not merely decide about the policy and programme of rural development but also implement it The advocates of this idea contend that the basic purpose of democratic decentralisation will be defeated if people in the rural areas are not allowed to have a say in matters which are of immediate concern to them They suggest that problems like sanitation and public health digging of wells, the development of agriculture soil conservation, grazing lands, local irrigation, forests, small industries and the like which agitate the minds of the rural community should be dealt with at the gram sabha level which should plan a

programme, formulate policy and decide upon the steps to implement it in any manner it considers fit. This alone will bring about participatory democracy and enable the villager to discover the process of panchayati raj. It will then be possible for him to take a lively and creative interest in the affairs of village administration and development which is the basic objective of democratic decentralisation. The advocates also point out that the problem of power becoming a monopoly of the few under panchayati raj restricting an equitable flow of benefits will also be solved. They also envisage that with activised gram sabhas as the basic unit of panchayati raj the panchayats acting as committees of the gram sabhas would in turn be activised automatically as the gram sabhas would keep a watch on them. On the other side a number of arguments can be forwarded to show that the concept of gram sabha as a deliberative-cum-executive body is not practicable in the village India of today. First, a large body like the gram sabha with varied and conflicting interests cannot be expected to decide on a broad-based policy and programme of rural development nor determine the steps to implement the programme. It would be too amorphous a body to think and act as one unit. Secondly, this framework of gram sabhas will place the panchayats in a very dubious position. At present the panchayat is less a unit of thought and action on account of its paucity of resources and more an implementing agency for the panchayat samiti. If the gram sabha becomes an activised deliberative-cum-executive body the panchayat will naturally be reduced to the position of an implementing agency in relation to the gram sabha also. So whatever little incentive the panchayats have may be sapped altogether. Worse the panchayats may find it almost impossible to reconcile with its dual obligations—to the panchayat samiti and to the gram sabha. Thirdly, the grant of power is not enough to activise the rural folk; it will be a case of over-simplification if the grant of additional power alone is considered sufficient to awaken the docile rural masses almost by way of magic. The awakening of rural India is part and parcel of the process of social change. This would take time whatever the quantum of powers granted to the gram sabha. (ii) As far as treating the gram sabha as a deliberative body is concerned it is comparatively less utopian than the idea of converting it into a deliberative-cum-executive body. Here again, besides the amorphous character of the gram sabha, there are two other practical difficulties that do not admit

of easy solution. First, the present three-tier structure envisaged by the Balwantray Mehta Report and adopted by most of the states does not admit of the concept of a gram sabha as a deliberative body. It is common knowledge that the panchayat samiti has been conceived as a deliberative unit (to whatever extent it is possible in our system of centralized planning). The entire three-tier structure will have to be readily altered if the gram sabha is to be fitted in as a deliberative body. Secondly, the experience with gram sabhas so far is that only the people of the village where the gram sabha is convened assemble for the meeting. Because of poor communications and the difficulty of returning home at night the people from other villages find it very difficult to attend the gram sabha meeting. If the gram sabha is made a deliberative body and were to decide upon policy and programme for even absentee villages it would be a mockery of both participation and consensus. It is therefore advisable to let the panchayats continue as deliberative-cum-executive bodies in the larger interest of participatory democracy for which panchayati raj is expected to be a suitable institutional framework. (iii) The only alternative left is that the gram sabha should be organised as a consultative body and entrusted with the authority to approve and censure rather than take policy decisions, formulate a work programme and look to its implementation. The gram sabha can therefore be used as a very significant medium of rural education for inculcating development and plan consciousness among the people and for rousing them into action making them constructively active in the great and challenging partnership of rural community development.

2. *Functions :* As a consultative body the gram sabha may have reviewing, approving and educative functions. It may review implementation, approve plans and serve as a clearing house of ideas and information. The gram sabha may review the following items : (i) Annual report of the panchayat with special reference to village production plan and community works and construction; (ii) accounts of panchayat; (iii) report on distribution and utilisation of medium and long-term loans; and (iv) evaluation of such *ad hoc* functions as the management of the village volunteer force and defence labour banks.

As far as approval of the gram sabha is concerned it should relate to (i) the budget of the panchayat; (ii) the development plan of the panchayat; and (iii) proposals concerning *ad hoc*

levy or donations on a project-wise basis.[44]

As far as the educative role of the gram sabha is concerned it relates to the use of the gram sabha as a forum for the circulation of useful information to the villagers for their initiation to better ways of life and thought and for mobilising their support for the panchayati raj programmes.

A new dimension can also be added to the role of the gram sabha; it can act as an advisory body even for activities which have not been decentralised. The suggestion becomes meaningful since an average villager finds it very difficult to distinguish between decentralised and centralised functions. Normally he has grievances against other departments and criticises them more than the panchayats. As a corollary to this it may become necessary for the representatives of other departments, particularly of revenue and police, to attend gram sabha meetings. It will lend prestige to the institution without any detriment to the tone of administration which may actually acquire an informal medium of democratic control.

3. *Date, timing and place of meeting* : The relevant suggestions under this head can be listed as: (i) It is seldom possible to conduct all the gram sabha meetings in a panchayat samiti in one month (May or October). The period should be statutorily extended to two months so that each panchayat samiti may have a longer span of time at its disposal for adjustment of the programmes of all the gram sabha meetings. This will also provide an element of flexibility and will relieve the strain on the block officials who have to attend one meeting after another in quick succession. One of our research officers has reported that in his panchayat samiti area 17 gram sabha meetings were held between 6th October and 25th October, 1962, i.e., within 20 days only. Except for a break on 14th October there was a gram sabha meeting every day between 10th October and 15th October, 1962. It naturally became quite a strenuous job for the vikas adhikari and the extension officers to do office work and attend day after day gram sabha meetings for which they had to travel a few miles and from where they could return only after midnight. It is

44. The recommendation becomes meaningful in the context of the idea that we have developed in the chapter dealing with finances that it will be far more practicable to urge the villagers to contribute money on the basis of specific projects which may be decided upon with their approval than to levy regular taxes which have a bad odour about them in popular esteem.

indeed commendable that a large majority of the block staff did not grudge this. It will however be in the interest of administration if the gram sabhas could be spaced by two or three days. In that case more block officials will find it convenient to attend all the gram sabha meetings. Alternatively it may also be good to group the gram sabha meetings in contingent panchayats and hold the meetings even in quick succession. The block staff may be divided and spread over in groups to attend gram sabha meetings which may also be held group-wise.

(ii) One of the main factors responsible for low attendance at gram sabha meetings and highlighted in our study, at least in regard to the gram sabhas held in October, is the unsuitability of the month from the point of view of farmers for whom it is the busiest period of the agricultural season. In double-crop areas, we found almost complete unanimity on the point that October is an unsuitable month for organising gram sabhas as the cultivators are busy in harvesting the kharif crop and making preparations for the rabi crop. At a time when work is at its peak the cultivators and villagers find it very difficult to spare the evenings for gram sabha meetings. It may be noted that November too is unsuitable because of the chilly evenings and cold nights while September with frequent rains may also be somewhat inconvenient. In such a situation the only possible solution seems to be that the period for gram sabha meetings may be fixed as 15th September to 15th November but special efforts made to hold as many meetings in October as possible. As far as the second round of gram sabha meetings is concerned, it may be well to prescribe a period between 15th April and 15th June. The extension of the period for holding gram sabhas will have two-fold advantages. First, it would leave enough time at the disposal of the panchayats to organise the gram sabha meetings; they at times find it difficult to compress them within the time limit of one month. Secondly, it would make it convenient for the officials to attend a larger number of meetings than they could possibly do now.

(iii) The Rajasthan Panchayat Act does not prescribe any timings for the gram sabha and, taking advantage of this lacuna, some sarpanchas arrange gram sabha meetings during the day when very few people are free to attend them. Unless a very special case is made for a gram sabha to be held in the day-time all gram sabha meetings should be called after sunset.

(iv) Regarding the place at which the gram sabha meeting is to be convened, the rule[45] framed under the Act does not categorically say that it can only be held in the village in which the panchayat office is situated. Normally this is the practice and it has the advantage that all the required documents are easily available. But it also results in a great disadvantage as people from outside the particular village where it is being held seldom attend a gram sabha meeting. As most of the panchayat circles in Rajasthan extend over a number of villages this lends an unrepresentative character to gram sabhas. There is a preponderance of people from one village while residents of other constituent villages are seldom present. Some ways and means have to be found out to make the gram sabha an all-villages affair. Apart from vigorous publicity a greater interest in the gram sabha could perhaps be developed if its venue is rotated from one village to another to allow all villages to hold the gram sabha by turn—a change which is permissible under the present law. Since the number of viliages per panchayat is not very large each village will get a chance to organise the gram sabha once in two or three years. The order of rotation of gram sabha meetings should be fixed by the panchayat. As the institution of gram sabhas gets firmly rooted in the village soil the number of gram sabha meetings may even be increased to make the rotation more realistic and meaningful. This suggestion would not solve the problem of making the gram sabha more representative than now, the problem being how to draw more people from other villages to the gram sabha. A system of village-wise gram sabhas or more than one gram sabha in one panchayat to cover contiguous villages may resolve the problem at some future date. There should be no objection to village-wise gram sabhas or more than one gram sabha for contiguous villages in the same panchayat samiti because the envisaged role of the gram sabha is only one of a consultative body. This suggestion is really loud thinking and is not being offered as a recommendation because the majority view does not favour it. It has been opposed on two counts: First, it is thought that the idea of a village-wise gram sabha will

45. The word 'ordinarily' used in the relevant rule No. 65 (reproduced below) makes a gram sabha meeting in the villages other than the headquarters village permissible : "The sarpanch or, in his absence, the up-sarpanch of a panchayat shall convene at least two half-yearly general meetings of all the adult residents of the panchayat circle in the months of May and October respectively *which shall ordinarily* be held in the village where the office of the panchayat is situated." (Italics added).

mean a negation of the very concept of gram sabha which implies people of all the constituent villages getting together for mutual deliberations on topics of common interest This purpose will not be served if gram sabhas meet village-wise Secondly, it may not be very practicable to hold village-wise gram sabhas in view of the fact that officials may find it very difficult to cope with the increased number of gram sabhas And the presence of the officials is necessary if the gram sabha is to fulfil its purpose and if its tone is to be set in the initial stages

4 *Attendance, agenda and publicity* The more important suggestions under this head are (i) It has been found that in the absence of specific statutory provisions the sarpanch, the up-sarpanch and the panchas frequently absent themselves from gram sabha meetings This should be checked and no member of the panchayat should be allowed to be absent from a gram sabha unless he obtains prior permission because of compelling reasons A similar provision should be made for the coopted members of the panchayat and the panchayat secretary Any panch, sarpanch or panchayat secretary who is absent from two gram sabhas in succession without intimation may even be declared liable to removal from office This should be possible only when information of the meeting of gram sabha is given to these functionaries at least a week in advance

(ii) In case of the vikas adhikari and the block staff a definite figure (preferably in percentage terms) should be prescribed as the minimum attendance for each block official which must be fulfilled This will introduce an element of flexibility as each extension officer would be able to adjust his visits according to his convenience and would not be required to attend meetings one after the other continuously for a fortnight Grouping of gram sabha meetings in contiguous areas and earmarking a team of officials to attend them in quick succession without returning to the headquarters may also be helpful It may also be useful if a distinction is made between the more important extension officers who must attend every meeting if necessary and others who may attend only some Such groupings may perhaps be made keeping in view the priorities assigned to various activities in different panchayats Different extension officers may be particularly useful in different panchayat circles depending on the nature of activities emphasised in particular areas

(iii) Every gram sabha must have a pre-arranged agenda finalized at the panchayat meeting. The agenda must not contain many items and must cover at least the following: (a) the progress report, (b) the development plans—schemes and targets, (c) the budget, (d) the audit report, and (e) the panchayat accounts. The progress report should have separate statements of developmental activities in the area, *taqqavis* and loans distributed, and other benefits including public works.[46]

(iv) Minutes of the proceedings at every meeting should be drawn up in Hindi and signed by the member who presides.

(v) The views so recorded should be reported by the presiding member to the panchayat at its next meeting. As already stated a rule in this regard already exists. What is important is that the rule, so far treated as a dead letter, should be followed both in letter and spirit.

(vi) The publicity mechanism needs to be strengthened if satisfactory attendance is to be ensured at gram sabha meetings. Every panchayat may be instructed to utilise fully the traditional communication media such as the gram balai. Arrangements may also be made for an announcement about the gram sabha by the beat of the drum for at least three days before the scheduled date in all the villages constituting a panchayat circle. Printed notices have only a limited use in this connection but care must be taken to utilise them in the best manner by affixing them in clearly visible form and at conspicuous places. It might be suggested here that the development department or the zila parishads should get large and colourful wall-posters printed about the gram sabhas and distribute them to the panchayats leaving blank space for the date, time and place of the meeting to be filled in by the panchayat secretary. One such poster in each village is

46. It may be well to recall here that rule No. 68 is already fairly exhaustive. It reads:

"68. *Views of residents on programmes and works of the panchayat to be recorded and reported :*

"1. At the first of such meetings held in any financial year the budget of the panchayat shall be placed before the meeting and the views of the residents thereon shall be recorded. At all such meetings the programmes and works undertaken by the panchayat shall be explained and their progress shall be reviewed. Specifically, at such meetings the programme and the development works undertaken or proposed to be undertaken in respect of community development work, agriculture, animal husbandry, health, education, social education, cooperation, cottage industries, shall be explained. The views of the residents thereon or any other suggestion for undertaking any development work shall be recorded."

likely to attract the attention of most people of the village.

5. *Business procedure :* The gram sabha meeting should be conducted in a free and open manner and all shades of opinion must be allowed to be expressed. If there are microphone arrangements, the mike (though its need is not as yet felt) should be made available to all those who desire to speak. No person should be allowed its exclusive use. The progress report, the panchayat budget and the development plans must be placed befoie the gram sabha in a lucid manner. If the people so desire discussion should be allowed on each item separately instead of first reading them out for an hour and then asking whether there were any questions or doubts in anybody's mind. The vikas adhikari should depute an extension officer to ensure that the sarpanch presents the three items in a manner that make them a connected story of which each part can be separately taken up for detailed discussion. Though at some gram sabhas the panchayat accounts and the audit report are presented, rules should be made to ensure that these items are always placed before the gram sabhas for discussion together with the sarpancha's answers or explanations for the audit objections if any. The list of beneficiaries of *taqqavis*, loans etc. should also be carefully prepared and presented at the meeting. It should be made a prescribed obligation of the panchayat secretary to produce, prepare and present all these documents at the gram sabha meeting and the reasons for defaults must be recorded in writing.

6. *Recording and reporting :* Some important suggestions in this regard are : (i) The panchayat secretary should be made responsible for recording the minutes of gram sabha meetings. It would be advisable to instruct the presiding officers to summarise discussion on every topic in the form of a resolution which may later be accepted or rejected. The minutes should record all the important points of view expressed at the gram sabha and must be maintained as a permanent file. A copy of the gram sabha minutes should be sent to the panchayat samiti containing all information about the date, time, place, attendance and the business transacted. Another copy might be sent to the zila parishad.

(ii) At present no record is kept of the persons who attend a gram sabha meeting. It may be worthwhile to collect signatures of the adults attending a meeting. The panchayat secretary may take down the names of those who cannot sign. This may also serve as an indirect stimulus for better attendance.

(iii) The presiding officer should make it a point to present a report about the gram sabha at the panchayat meeting[47] where it must be discussed thoroughly and the panchayat's decisions on the resolutions and recommendations of the gram sabha must be communicated to the panchayat samiti.

(iv) At every gram sabha meeting the minutes of the previous meeting and those of the panchayat meeting should be presented so that the people may get an idea of what transpired at the previous gram sabha meeting and how the gram sabha resolutions were being followed up. This would strengthen the institution of gram sabha as the panchayats would become more responsive to gram sabha decisions.

7. *Miscellaneous* : Some general suggestions may also be made in the end : (i) At every gram sabha venue care should be taken for proper seating arrangements including separate arrangements for women. Efforts must be made to keep the children away till the cinema show starts by engaging them in other recreational activities.

(ii) It should be prescribed as a statutory duty of the sarpanch to call the gram sabha meeting. A "show cause" notice may be issued to any sarpanch who fails to do so and persistent defaulters must be dealt with sternly. The sarpanchas must at least be made to fix a date and make some efforts to get the people to a gram sabha instead of allowing them to get away as at present. It may be useful if the panchayat samiti asks for a report about the gram sabha meetings. In case a panchayat has failed to convene a meeting the pradhan may ask for an explanation. He should also ask the sarpanch to hold the meeting as early as possible. If he fails again the matter may be reported to the collector.

(iii) The panchayat secretary's duties in regard to the gram

47. An interesting suggestion made in this connection by one of our research officers is that just after the closure of a gram sabha meeting the panchayat meeting for that panchayat circle should be held. This would clearly be a distinct advantage as it would solve the problem of communication from gram sabha to the panchayat and would undoubtedly lead to quicker and better implementation of the gram sabha decisions. However there are two snags in the scheme which may reduce its utility. One snag is that gram sabha meetings usually extend to well past midnight. To expect the tired panchas to continue their deliberations while they are either inclined to sleep or watch a film show appears to be asking for too much. Another difficulty may be that the panchayat secretary may not be in a position to prepare a report of the gram sabha meeting at such short notice. It may be worthwhile however to insist that a panchayat meets within a week to consider the gram sabha proceedings.

sabha meetings must be clearly laid down and the panchayat inspector instructed to check specially on his performance.

(iv) Every zila parishad must arrange a 'one-day seminar-cum-demonstration camp' annually where all the sarpanchas of the district can be trained in the technique of calling and conducting gram sabha meetings.

To sum up, an honest and sincere effort is needed first to make the institution of gram sabha a live institution in its present form and then to let it grow to full stature on the principle of gradualness and spontaneous and natural growth. This should not be in isolation but in organic unity with the panchayati raj movement; not merely in the light of theoretical surmises but keeping in view the actualities of India's rural scene. The grant of more power will not necessarily create more interest in the gram sabha if the villagers' interest in the use of whatever little powers they have is any index. The process of activisation should begin with panchayats and percolate through individual panchas to the wards and then through them to the gram sabha. In fact active ward sabhas should precede an active gram sabha.

VIII

Justice at the Grass Roots

IT has been our endeavour to study the working of panchayati raj in all its dimensions with regard to our limited sample in one of the districts of Rajasthan. We have tried to study not merely the three tiers of panchayati raj—the panchayat, panchayat samiti and the zila parishad—but also to evaluate the working of nyaya panchayat and gram sabha which in fact are the two other tiers of panchayati raj in Rajasthan and elsewhere. Here an attempt has been made to evaluate the working of three nyaya panchayats—one each in the field of our three research officers. Each research officer studied one nyaya panchayat at close quarters in his area and the present report is the consolidated version of the three studies prepared by them.

It is obvious that our sample of nyaya panchayat is rather limited in scope as one research officer could study only one nyaya panchayat in his area. All three research officers chose the nyaya panchayat situated at the headquarters of their panchayat samiti as it was easier to study than the distant ones. It may be added that they could not study other nyaya panchayats because our original project outline did not include these institutions at all and the hands of our research officers were already full.

In spite of the limited nature of our sample it may be modestly claimed that our research officers made exhaustive and intensive survey of the nyaya panchayats and their assessment can be taken as fairly reliable. Ours is primarily a study of nyaya panchayats at work both in its structural and operational aspects. The findings therefore have an empirical basis in the limited context indicated above. No attempt is being made here, as elsewhere, to generalise

on the basis of our limited sample, though it is felt that our findings may have a general applicability and credence to a fairly good extent. This has been our feeling after discussing our main findings with the officials and non-officials associated with the working of the panchayati raj institutions in general and nyaya panchayats in particular.

It may be worthwhile to repeat that our approach here, as elsewhere, has been one of qualitative appraisal, though statistical data has been used when found necessary. The research officers followed by and large a detailed schedule for guidance in preparing their report adding to it the new problems they came across in their field of study.

The Statutory Pattern

The statutory basis for nyaya panchayat has been provided by the Rajasthan Panchayat Act 1953 (Act No. 21 of 1953 as amended up to 5th April, 1961). Chapter 4 of the Act provides the details regarding the organisation of nyaya panchayat. The Act empowers the state government to constitute nyaya panchayats in contiguous panchayat circles by notification in the state gazette. Usually the number of such circles should be between five and seven. But the nyaya panchayats could be established for a lesser number of such circles also if the state government decides to do so in its discretion. The area served by nyaya panchayats could be constituted by the state government.

Election Process

The Rajasthan Panchayat Act only provides that election will be indirect and that one member shall be elected from each of the panchayat areas included in the nyaya panchayat area. The actual method of election is not provided for in the Act. This has been left at the discretion of the state government. Obviously the state government can change the manner of election any time as it deems fit.

Qualification

As regards the qualification of the person to be elected as a nyaya panch, the Act provides that only such a person can be elected as is a duly enrolled voter in that particular area. The

electoral rolls of the panchayat election are the same as those for the election to the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly.

Coming now to a detailed description of the qualifications needed for election as a member of nyaya panchayat, a person (i) must have completed 30 years of age; (ii) must be able to read and write Hindi; (iii) must not suffer from any disqualifications mentioned in section 11 of the Act; (iv) must not be sarpanch, panch, a member of the panchayat samiti, pradhan of the panchayat samiti, pramukh of the zila parishad or a member thereof, a member of any standing committee of the panchayat samiti, a member of state legislative assembly or of either house of the Parliament.

Should a man be appointed who holds any of these offices he is deemed to have resigned after having been elected as a member of the nyaya panchayat. Likewise, if after his election the member comes to hold any one of the offices mentioned above his membership of the nyaya panchayat stands automatically terminated. These provisions are important because they aim at the establishment of an independent judiciary.

Tenure

A nyaya panchayat is elected for a period of six years with nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ retiring every second year by rotation. A member may also resign from office earlier if he so desires. No one is allowed to be a member of more than one nyaya panchayat concurrently. The nyaya panchayat is thus a continuing body which is never dissolved completely.

Constitution of Benches

The Act requires the chairman to constitute benches. Each bench should have at least three members. The chairman may or may not be included in a bench. The state government has the power to regulate the procedure, the number of sittings, etc., by making rules. No member could sit on a bench in the circle that has returned him. Furthermore, if he has any personal interest in the case he is not eligible to act as member of the nyaya panchayat. The parties to a dispute can also object to any one member sitting on the bench. Reasons for the objection are not necessarily to be disclosed. Members against whom objections are raised are not allowed to sit any further in that case.

Privileges

Every member of the nyaya panchayat, the chairman and officers of the administrative staff of the nyaya panchayat (including the secretary and peon) are public servants within the meaning of the Indian Penal Code 1860, and are entitled to protection under the Judicial Officers Protection Act 1950, while acting as a member of the nyaya panchayat.

Jurisdiction

The nyaya panchayat enjoys both civil and criminal jurisdiction. It can impose a fine up to Rs. 50 but is not competent to award any other punishment. The whole or a part of the fine, when realised from the accused, may be paid to the offended party by way of compensation. If the fine remains unpaid for a fortnight the matter is referred to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of the area who proceeds to collect the sum, as if the fine was imposed by him. On the civil side nyaya panchayats are competent to hear and decide cases involving amounts up to Rs. 250.

Procedure

The procedure of work in the nyaya panchayat is very simple. If someone wants to file a suit this could be done either orally or in writing, by addressing the chairman and depositing a prescribed fee together with it. In the absence of the chairman this could be addressed to any other member. If the application is made orally its substance is to be recorded in writing and the signature or thumb impression of the applicant is to be obtained. This should further be attested either by the chairman or, in his absence, by a member. Both parties are given notice of the date and time of hearing of their case. The nyaya panchayat, after due enquiry, gives decisions which are recorded in writing. It may dismiss an application or, alternatively, direct that more witnesses be produced. If either party resides outside the jurisdiction of the nyaya panchayat summons to call them are sent to the Munsiff, Civil Judge or Magistrate who proceeds to serve the same, as if issued by him.

The nyaya panchayats, while discharging their duties, are not bound by the Code of Civil Procedure 1908, Code of Criminal Procedure 1898, Court Fee Act 1870, Indian Evidence Act of 1872,

and the Indian Limitations Act of 1908. These provisions may have been intended to simplify the working procedure of the nyaya panchayats and to mitigate the hardship of the litigants.

Area

For the purpose of nyaya panchayat, the panchayat samiti area is divided into nyaya panchayat circles, each having a nyaya panchayat of its own. Since the panchayat samiti area is large and the means of transport and communications are under-developed this had to be done to make it accessible to the people.

Working of Nyaya Panchayat

Structural Aspect

Area: A nyaya panchayat on an average serves a population of about 14 to 15 thousand. It is believed that, by and large, this is the optimum population which can possibly be covered by a nyaya panchayat. Sometimes even larger areas are recommended to augment the resources of the nyaya panchayat. However, this is not the correct approach. While there can be no two opinions about the necessity of augmenting nyaya panchayat resources, an increase in the area of the nyaya panchayat is hardly the way of doing it. The area of a nyaya panchayat should be small enough to maintain the compact character of its jurisdiction so that the villager may be afraid to tell a lie in the presence of those with whom he happens to be acquainted. If the operational area gets widened it will start functioning in the same strange atmosphere for the villager in which a court functions.[48] Moreover in view of the complaints of accumulated arrears (to which a detailed reference will be made elsewhere) an extension of the

48 It may be worthwhile to recall here the observation of the *Report of the Study Team on Nyaya Panchayats* in this regard :

"We cannot obviously support the formation of nyaya panchayat for such large areas. In our view, to get the best results, there is no doubt that villages will have to be grouped and such grouping will depend upon various factors like area, population, contiguity, compactness, means of communication and the like. No villager should be required to travel, say, more than four to five miles to reach his nyaya panchayat. That is to say the nyaya panchayat should be easily accessible; it should not be burdened with far too many cases which would be the case if it were to exercise jurisdiction over a very large area like a block. Besides cutting down expenditure, the system of grouping will result in neutralising, if not eliminating altogether, the factions and feuds in villages born in differences in caste, community, religion and of late political affiliations". (vide: *Report of the Study Team on Nyaya Panchayats,* Government of India, Ministry of Law, pp. 46-47.)

area of nyaya panchayat does not appear to be feasible. This will be borne out by the empirical analysis mentioned below.

In our area of study the grouping of villages for the purposes of nyaya panchayats has taken place as follows:

TABLE XXVII

Name of nyaya panchayat	*Number of village panchayat*	*Number of nyaya circles*	*No. of village panchayats attached to each nyaya panchayat*
'J'	21	4	I—3
			II—6
			III—6
			IV—6
'D'	41	7	I—6
			II—5
			III—6
			IV—5
			V—6
			VI—6
			VII—7
'S'	33	6	I—6
			II—6
			III—5
			IV—5
			V—6
			VI—6
			VII—5

It will be obvious that a nyaya panchayat already has quite a few villages to cover and in view of the large number of cases that pour in an extension of its operational area is not feasible.

Fixation of headquarters: In deciding on the headquarters of a nyaya panchayat due care is taken to see that it is centrally located and is easily accessible to all. Sometimes, however, distances may be unavoidable; a particular village may be located at a distance of 12 miles or so with no means of communication except a camel. The average distances here vary from three to 7.5 miles. Thus from the point of view of area and population as well as location the organisation of a nyaya panchayat seems to be satisfactory.

Composition and the mode of election : For each nyaya circle there is a nyaya panchayat composed of one member elected by each of its constituent panchayats. The nyaya panchas to represent the constituent units are elected indirectly by an electoral college consisting of the sarpanch and panchas of the village panchayats. Since there is no provision for secret ballot the elections are held by show of hands.

No sensational stories have been reported by our research officers about the election of the nyaya panchas. Two of our research officers feel that the system of indirect election has been working satisfactorily. The observations of our third research officer are mixed. He observes that the method of indirect election worked well in one of the nyaya panchayats and the persons elected were the best locally available. The elections were unanimous and there was no political bargaining whatsoever. But he has emphasised that this was not so in other nyaya panchayats in his area where election to the office of a nyaya panch was considered to be a reward for having withdrawn one's candidature from panchayat elections. He has also noted that nyaya panchas elected in these cases had a ridiculously low level of education and were quite incapable of grasping the niceties of law they were supposed to administer. They were also reported to have political aspirations which they sought to fulfil by getting into the nyaya panchayat. Thus it is difficult to say that the method of indirect election of the nyaya panchas has worked satisfactorily in a uniform manner.

Still our research officers feel that indirect election to the nyaya panchayats is the best medium that can be conceived at the moment. They feel that the indirect method of election avoids a clash of loyalty, mutual jealousies, partisan canvassing and

similar evils associated with direct elections[49]. It should not be forgotten that the method of indirect election can also lapse into all the evils associated with direct election. When the electoral college is small indirect election becomes in practice, more or less, nomination by the group which can command a larger support in the electoral college.

Even in the cases where members have been returned unopposed it would not be correct to presume that all is well. In a certain nyaya panchayat all except one nyaya panch were elected unanimously. A look at the antecedents of the members would convince anyone that they were strong supporters (and, in one case, a relative also) of the sarpanch, and had been elected because of his influence. Our research officer observes. "By and large relations with the sarpanch of the panchayats remained the most dominant factor leading to the election of the members of the nyaya panchayat". Often the sarpanch accommodated the defeated panchayat members. Soon after an election petition was filed and the chairman had to relinquish his office under orders of the Collector because his opponent's nomination paper had been rejected on improper considerations. In the bye election the same man was elected again without contest. Under such circumstances it is really difficult to conceive that these elections are immune from political influences. Very often unanimous elections are taken as an indication of solidarity and community of sentiments in the village. However, this need not be true in all cases.

What happens is that for all practical purposes the method of indirect election comes to vest the power of nomination in the small dominating group in the electoral college instead of in the state government or in one of its agencies. It is a debatable point whether under these circumstances it would be better to vest the power to nominate a nyaya panch in the government instead of in an electoral college. It may be said in favour of nomination by the government that this method may secure more independence for the nyaya panchas and an impartial

49. *Cf:* the observation of *Nyaya Panchayat Report, op. cit.* p. 125.
"[illegible] nomination in [illegible] the choice lies [illegible] od of indirect elections seems to afford for the time being the best solution and of the various pos[illegible] gram pa[illegible] on the [illegible]

deal for the villagers to a greater extent than the method of indirect election.

But the method of nomination is branded as undemocratic. Similarly the method of direct election is dismissed on the ground that it would draw judicial administration to the arena of power politics. The method of indirect election is thus supported as the only worthwhile via-media. In the absence of a better alternative we are inclined to feel that the method of indirect election of the nyaya panchas should be continued though in a modified form. It might be a good idea if the present electoral college prepared a panel of names at the ratio of 1:3; *i.e.* for every vacancy to be filled in there should be three names. The panel would be arranged in an alphabetical order and the District Judge or some other judicial officer (holders of judicial-cum-executive offices being excluded) authorised to make a final choice. It may be added that the panel should be accompanied by a statement giving such particulars as age, caste, standard of education, past experience, etc. It may also be pointed out whether the person has contested and lost in elections to any of the panchayati raj institutions. Such a system will ensure the advantages of both election as well as nomination, of course in a modified fashion.[50]

At present each panchayat sends only one panch to serve on the nyaya panchayat. The result is that one member has to serve on several benches. If one of two members does not turn up the work of the nyaya panchayat is held up. It is, therefore, necessary that each panchayat elects at least two persons to serve on the nyaya panchayats. Incidentally, this is also the view of the *Nyaya Panchayat Report*[51] which is further borne out by the empirical findings of our research officers. It may be worthwhile to point out that if the number of nyaya panchas from each panchayat is increased to two, the following advantages may accrue:

(i) A large number of members may be available for service on the nyaya panchayat benches. The same members may

50. This pattern is in force in Assam. Sec. 87 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 thus reads: "The district judge shall select five persons to act as members of the panchayati adalt from a panel of members consisting of two representatives elected as prescribed by each gaon sabha falling within the jurisdiction of the panchayati adalt". In U.P. also the prescribed authority appoints the members of the nyaya panchayat after they have been elected. (See Sec. 43 of the United Provinces Panchayati Raj Act, 1947, as amended by U.P. Acts of 1950, 1952, 1954 and 1955.)

51. *Nyaya Panchayat Report, op. cit.*, p. 133.

not be required to serve on several benches Even if one or two members do not turn up the work of the nyaya panchayat will not be held up

(ii) If a larger number of members are available each party to the dispute may exercise the option of objecting to the presence of a person on a particular bench This would make the working of the nyaya panchayat more impartial than what it is today when there are only a few men available for each panchayat

Caste structure of nyaya panchayat A look at the persons elected as nyaya panchas in our area of study will reveal that the nyaya panchas come from caste Hindu rural families and belong to the middle class People from the scheduled caste and backward classes do not seem to have been associated with the institution as nyaya panchas Similarly no woman has been elected to the nyaya panchayats in our area of study The following table will bear out these observations in regard to the caste structure of the nyaya panchayats

Table XXVIII

Name of nyaya panchayat	*Brahmin*	*Rajput*	*Other caste Hindus*	*Scheduled caste*	*unknown*
'J'	3		1		1
'D'	1	3	2		
'S'	2	2			1

Even if we assume that the unknown ones represent the scheduled caste and backward classes their association is rather meagre This is to be appreciated against the background of the caste-conscious character of the villager which may make it difficult for the scheduled caste and backward classes to expect a fair deal at the hands of the nyaya panchas in the absence of their own representative particularly when other nyaya panchas may be tradition-oriented and psychologically obsessed with such complexes as untouchability

Similarly, to expedite the process of social change in rural India, it is necessary that women are also associated with the institution of nyaya panchayats But their active participation

cannot be artificially enlarged as it is itself a part and parcel of a long drawn out process of social change.[52] We, therefore, endorse the following two rocommendations of the *Report of the Nyaya Panchayat* : (i) If no woman member is elected two women members should be coopted. If one is elected only one is to be coopted. (ii) One person belonging to the scheduled caste is to be coopted if no such person has been elected to the nyaya panchayat.

The agency to coopt should be the nyaya panchayat itself. Even at the risk of digression it may be recalled that the principle of cooption has not delivered the goods in the panchayat samitis and the panchayats where it has been misused to add to the voting strength of the dominant group. It is necessary that there should be some checks and balances to safeguard against a similar trend creeping into the nyaya panchayat institutions also, though the chances of its misuse at the level of the nyaya panchayat are comparatively less than elsewhere.

Constitution of benches : After their elections to the nyaya panchayat, members elect the chairman. This is done by the show of hands. The chairman appoints benches of the nyaya panchayat. Sometimes the benches might be as numerous as the number of villages. A member is not allowed to serve on the bench which functions in his village panchayat. This practice has both its advantages and disadvantages. On the credit side it may be pointed out that it is a necessary device to ensure impartiality. A man who has been living in his village since childhood may have his friends and foes, likes and prejudices. He might be much too emotionally involved in certain disputes, more particularly in which members of his own class, family or caste are involved. On the debit side it may be said that when the villager goes to the nyaya panchayat he finds himself more or less in the same strange environment as in a court of law. It is argued that a man may find it difficult and somewhat embarrassing to make a false statement in the presence of persons who he believes have known the correct version. When he has only outsiders as nyaya panchas the atmosphere is very similar to that of a court of law where a man could indulge in all sorts of falsehood, sometimes even under oath with a sense of impunity and without any fear of social conscience operating against him. Thus it is

52. *The Report of the Nyaya Panchayat, op. cit.*, p. 123.

difficult to reach a definite conclusion with regard to the feasibility of putting a person on the bench which functions in his own village. On the whole the argument in favour of not placing him on the bench in such a situation appears weightier than the advantages that may accrue if this restriction is withdrawn. It is therefore worthwhile to continue this practice.

One of our research officers has put forward a suggestion that the member from the village may be informally consulted with regard to the realities of the case before the nyaya panchayat. Given proper trial the practice may become helpful in knowing the truth and administering justice in its light. The objectivity of such an opinion will always be open to question. Since the member is a part of the village he cannot be expected to isolate himself completely from the life of the village community and be in a position to take a detached view in the case. This is more difficult to expect from nyaya panchas who may have their own axe to grind.

The chances of the chairman misusing the authority to constitute benches should be taken seriously. He may put himself on all benches except the one functioning in his own village. In fact, one chairman has been reported to have resorted to this practice in one of the nyaya panchayats in our area of study. What is worse the chairman may place his favourite nyaya panch on several benches even at the cost of other nyaya panchas. One of our research officers has reported that in one case it so happened that a member who was obviously in the bad books of the chairman was not placed on any of the benches whatsoever. The inspecting magistrate took serious objection to that and pointed out that each nyaya panch should get an opportunity to serve on more than one bench. He correctly held that there was absolutely no justification for one member being included in all the five benches and the other not being given a seat on a single bench. It will be worthwhile to prescribe both the minimum and maximum limits about the placement of a nyaya panch on the various benches of the nyaya panchayat in the circle proportionately to the number of the benches. It may also be worthwhile to ask for the preferences of the nyaya panchas about placement on the nyaya panchayat benches and accommodate them as far as possible. It may be desirable to assign them to benches functioning in the neighbourhood of their villages so that inconvenience caused by distance may be minimized as far as possible.

Staffing Pattern

The nyaya panchayat does not have a large staff. Usually it has a secretary and a peon who also very often do not serve on a whole-time basis. Their salaries are quite low as compared to prevailing salaries elsewhere in similar occupations. The salary of a secretary serving on a full-time basis varies between Rs. 60 and Rs. 100 per month and a peon gets a consolidated salary of Rs. 45 per month. They are appointed by the chairman of the nyaya panchayat subject to the approval of the collector. Very often they are appointed by the chairman on a temporary basis and they continue to work in this capacity pending the approval of the collector which, according to one of our research officers, takes unduly long to come. To add to this, the vacancies occurring in the nyaya panchayat office are not given proper publicity. They are not advertised in the press. All that is done is that a notice is put up on the notice board of the panchayat samiti announcing the vacancies. It may be revealing if an effort is made to find out how many people come to know of the vacancies by this means of publicity. Our impression is that very few people do. The absence of proper publicity and of a committee to make appointments may mean that appointments are made on personal considerations or through political pressure. Instances have been cited of appointments having been offered to close relatives of the pradhan, up-pradhan or sarpanch. Such appointments are likely to influence even the course of justice.

What is worse is that the service conditions in the nyaya panchayats are really bad. Salaries are not paid regularly; a problem closely linked up with the crippled financial position of the panchayats and the nyaya panchayats. It has been reported that in a nyaya panchayat the secretary could not be paid his salary for nine months. Consequently he had to quit and take up some other employment. Even when he resigned his outstanding dues were not cleared. A year after his resignation four months' salary was paid to him and perhaps to this day the rest of his dues is in balance. The same happened with the peon in this nyaya panchayat. After having served for several months he could get an advance of Rs. 25 only, and that also in two instalments. In utter disgust he resigned his job and went elsewhere to seek employment. Like the secretary, his dues also are outstanding.

The foregoing account of favouritism in appointments and of poor service conditions defeats all canons of sound personnel administration Under such conditions discipline is bound to suffer and the morale of the employees must invariably be low It is high time that suitable steps are taken to see that the staffing pattern is organised on a sound footing Some of these steps could be (i) a district cadre of nyaya panchayat secretaries should be created, (ii) the vacancies should be properly advertised, (iii) the recruitment may take place through panchayat samitis and zila parishads services selection commission and (iv) service conditions should be improved and, more particularly care should be taken to see that salaries are disbursed regularly

Financial Aspect

The problems referred to above with regard to the staffing pattern of the nyaya panchayats are closely linked with the critical financial condition in which the nyaya panchayats find themselves today

On an average their revenue comes to about Rs 3000 a year A substantial portion of the revenue comes by way of contributions by the constituent panchayats The contributions remain unpaid because in very many cases the panchayats themselves are not financially well of In the beginning the panchayats had accepted this arrangement expecting that this would mean no burden to them as it was anticipated that their share of the fine to be imposed by the nyaya panchayat would total more than what they would be asked to contribute As a matter of fact the panchayats had looked upon this as a source of income When it became clear to them that their calculations were far from correct they became lukewarm to the whole scheme The table in the following page is self explanatory

Thus very often default occurs on their part Our research officers in the field have noted several such cases of default For example, village panchayat 'R' in the 'J' nyaya panchayat paid only Rs 100 while its total contribution should have been Rs 194 56 Commenting on this our research officer observed that "other panchayats whose financial position is no better than that of this poor nyaya panchayat chose to remain indifferent" The experience of other research officers is similar In panchayat

Table XXIX

(Rupees)

S. no.	Panchayat	Population	Fees and fines collected by nyaya panchayat office			Fees and fines collected by panchayat office	Total collection of fees and fines	Panchayat's contribution to nyaya panchayat (on population proportion basis)	Panchayt's proportionate share (on the basis of the distribution of fees & fines collected by nyaya panchayat)	Loss to panchayats
			Court fee	Process fee	Fines					
1.	'D'	2829	124.81	24.25	—	115.70	264.76	207.02	136.45	70.57
2.	'G'	2437	6.10	7.50	28.00	49.40	91.00	170.68	114.91	63.77
3.	'Kh'	1510	11.15	2.50	—	95.00	108.65	110.01	100.55	9.46
4.	'N'	2305	1.70	2.50	5.00	26.00	35.20	169.00	114.91	54.09
5.	'S'	2787	15.43	8.00	—	93.00	116.43	203.94	129.27	74.67
6.	'Sa'	2337	21.24	2.50	32.25	46.15	102.14	171.35	122.09	49.26
	Total	14205	180.43	47.25	65.25	425.25	718.18	1040.00	718.18	321.82

samiti 'S' members proposed at the first meeting of the nyaya panchayat that the chairman should make an advance of Rs. 50 so that stationery etc. might be purchased for its working. Our research officer stationed at panchayat samiti 'D' is also not happy with the total and abject dependence of the nyaya panchayats upon the panchayats "for their income and collection of necessary funds".

Other sources of income of the nyaya panchayat are court fee and fines. Our experience in this regard has not been uniform. One of our research officers has reported that in one case only Rs. 2 against the estimated income of Rs. 500 from fine was collected. In a case reported by another research officer the maximum fine went up to Rs. 115.70. It may be emphasised that as a matter of social policy both fees and fines should be nominal and these cannot be regarded as a means of raising income. Not only this. As the tone of social behaviour in villages improves the importance of fees and fines as sources of revenue is bound to decline. Such income, therefore, does not go very far in improving the financial condition of the nyaya panchayats. Often the nyaya panchayats are held responsible for the unsatisfactory state of their finances. "One adverse feeling about the working of the nyaya panchayat has been that it has not developed on a firm footing its own resources". This is not something for which the nyaya panchayats could be held responsible.

Not only are the finances of the nyaya panchayats meagre the process of the collection of court fee is also cumbersome. A person has first to file a complaint with the nyaya panchayat and get the court fee fixed. Thereafter he goes to the panchayat, deposits the court fee with it, obtains a receipt and reports to the

Table XXIX

(*Rupees*)

Name of panchayat samiti	*Establishment*	*Prospective expenditure*	*Back to panchayat*	*T.A.*	*D.A.*	*Misc.*
'J'	1500	200	703	300	100	2803
'D'	840	—	1000	50	150	2068

nyaya panchayat. Only then the proceedings can start. A share of the court fee is given back to the nyaya panchayat in due course of time. Thus the nyaya panchayat is not in a position to use the court fee instantly on office establishment and disbursement of salary, etc.

On the expenditure side, the details of which are given in Table XXIX, about 50% of the income is spent on establishment alone. The amount paid back to the panchayat varies between 25% and 50%. The remaining amount is spent on T.A. and D.A. It is obvious that expenditure, as far as the nyaya panchayat goes, is very meagre..

It goes without saying that an improvement in the financial resources of the nyaya panchayats is essential for their efficacy as an organ of judicial administration. It is certainly an intriguing problem as to how to place the nyaya panchayats on a more sound financial footing both in terms of organisation and resources. A few suggestions in this regard are given below :

(i) It may be worthwhile if the litigants are allowed to deposit their court fee with the nyaya panchayat which may later pass on the prescribed share to the panchayats at the end of the year or even earlier as prescribed under the rules. This was done in one of the nyaya panchayats we studied by a decision at the panchayat samiti level with beneficial results. It is feasible that this is enforced throughout the state by law. With this the litigants need not have to run about from the nyaya panchayat to the panchayat and the other way about. The harassment to the litigants in this respect could be minimised. Proper arrangements for the custody of money have, however, to be made. This may follow the pattern at present adopted by the panchayat.

(ii) It should be made an obligation of the pradhan to ensure that the nyaya panchayat budget is approved by the panchayat samiti well in time so that irregularities in payment may be avoided. He need not take extra pains in this regard as the budget items of the nyaya panchayat are simple and non-controversial. The delay, in fact, is caused because the urgency of passing the nyaya panchayat budget is not realised at the panchayat samiti level nor the responsibility in this regard is definitely fixed on the pradhan.

(iii) The nyaya panchayats should be made entirely free of

the panchayati raj institutions as far as financial assistance is concerned. At present the panchayats have hardly financial reserves to bear the administrative costs of nyaya panchayats which must maintain a minimum staff of a secretary and a peon in the interest of justice. As the panchayat samiti has no other link with the nyaya panchayats it would not be desirable to maintain any financial link between the two. This is especially so because the panchayat samitis tend to be dominated by political considerations of which the nyaya panchayats should be kept free for the administration of justice in an independent manner.

It would be desirable for this purpose to reserve the entire proceeds of the surcharge on stamp duty for distribution among the nyaya panchayats on a population basis. Though the provision for such a surcharge has been made in the existing statutes and rules its implementation has been suspended for the time being. The provision should be activised, a surcharge on stamp duty at the rate of 3% to 5% levied and its proceeds utilised for providing the minimum funds to the nyaya panchayats.

(iv) Besides making available the share of surcharge on stamp duty to the nyaya panchayats it would be in the interest of healthy development of these institutions if the state government set up a special fund to underwrite the establishment charges of the nyaya panchayats including the salaries and allowances admissible to the nyaya panchayat secretary and the peon.

Functional Aspect

The nyaya panchayats have been working only for a period of two years or so and it is rather too early to pass a judgment on their functioning. Still the following advantages may be claimed to their credit :

(i) It can be said that the establishment of the nyaya panchayat has definitely brought the seats of justice closer to the people. Justice is no longer being administered for the village folk in a strange atmosphere by a magistrate who does not share most of their value judgments. It is now being administered almost right at their door by their kinsmen who are part of the village community. It is really good to have justice

administered by one's fellow members of the community. This is the basis of trial by jury and the practice of trial of the peer by the peers. This also is in keeping with local community administration.

(ii) As stated earlier and as a corollary to the above advantage the litigants may find it difficult to indulge in any falsehood when justice is administered by their kinsmen. So far as the impression goes falsehood has only been minimized.

(iii) Nyaya panchayats have made justice cheaper. All that the villager has to do now is to file an application and pay the nominal prescribed fee which is much lower than the court fee payable in regular courts of law for a similar case. Since lawyers are not allowed to argue a case the cost of litigation has naturally come down. Earlier the parties had to travel to the town together with their witnesses. Now the cost of travelling, board and lodging in a town does not have to be incurred.

(iv) It may also be said that on the whole the village community has received the nyaya panchayats well. It is evident from a comparatively small number of cases in which appeals have been preferred against the decisions of the nyaya panchayats. Out of 51 criminal cases decided by the nyaya panchayats in our area of study appeals were preferred only in two. Similarly, out of 42 civil cases appeal was made against only one judgment. These instances may be taken as indicating at least to an extent the faith that villagers have reposed in the institution of nyaya panchayat.

(v) It is probable that the number of cases going to the courts from villages have lessened.[53] We are not definite about the position. Our research officers in the field also have not been able to reach any definite conclusion in this regard. This is so because at this stage it is not possible for us to say as to what type of cases are being handled by the nyaya panchayats. There are two possibilities. These might be cases which used to be decided earlier by the village headman, patel or the traditional caste panchayat. Alternatively,

53. The Deputy Director gathered the impression in his talks with the Joint Development Commissioner, the District Development Officer and the District Level Officers that the number of cases going to the courts has lessened.

these might be cases which would have gone to the courts in the absence of the nyaya panchayat. As we do not have any comparative data in this regard it is not possible for us to be precise on this point. At least one of our research officers feels that the cases normally dealt with by the nyaya panchayats today were earlier dealt with by the village headman, patel or the traditional caste panchayat. If it proves true it would only mean that since the nyaya panchayat is available today people use it just as earlier they used the agencies of patel, headman or the conventional panchayat and that the cases dealt with by the nyaya panchayats are the ones to which much importance should not be attached. If this is the position it could be said that cases on which the villagers are likely to spend large amounts of money are still being taken to the court of law and that only unimportant cases entailing little expenditure as before are being diverted to the nyaya panchayats. This point needs further probing before a definite conclusion is ventured.

(vi) It may be worthwhile to point out that the institution of the nyaya panchayat has encouraged the principle of conciliation as a way of deciding disputes. Surprisingly, conciliation is being successfully resorted to not so much at the initial stage of judgment as at the review stage. This is a rather intriguing situation. At whatever stage it is used the method of conciliation for solving rural disputes is an advantage from the sociological point of view.

However, all is not well with the working of the nyaya panchayats. The following shortcomings deserve mention:

Shortcomings

In certain cases the members do not seem to take the meetings of the nyaya panchayats seriously. Table XXX below gives details about the frequency of attendance by the nyaya panchas.

It was noted that on as many as 12 occasions in a year no meeting could be held for want of quorum. As shown in the table out of 54 meetings held between March 21, 1961 and March 23, 1962 in a nyaya panchayat, the maximum attendance by one nyaya panch came to 49 and minimum to 14 the average working out at 30 which is more than 50 per cent. In another nyaya panchayat out of 79 meetings the maximum attendance of a

Table XXX

(Nyaya Panchayat 'D')

Member	*Total meetings attended**	*Total absence*	*Remarks*	*Percentage of attendance*
Sh. Raghunath Singh ('D')	55	12	was a member during which only 67 meetings were held.	
Sh. Raghunath Singh ('C')	38	41		47.5
Sh. Bhawani Singh ('K')	54	25		67.5
Sh. Ram Prasad ('N')	44	35		55
Sh. Ram Chandra ('S')	50	29		62.5
Sh. Sobhag Mal ('S')	45	34		55

Total meetings held : 79

nyaya panch came to 54 and the minimum to 38. According to one of our research officers, on nine occasions during a year only two members were present and on seven only one was present. Another research officer reports that out of 79 occasions three members were present at 20 meetings, two members were available at nine and on seven occasions only one member was present. According to another research officer on twelve occasions between April 19, 1961 and March 21, 1962 the meetings could not be held for want of quorum. All this is likely to cause undue hardship to the litigants who come and waste their time in quest of justice which is delayed for no fault of theirs.

It may be worthwhile to probe the factors responsible for the lack of interest in the nyaya panchayats. First, the working of

the nyaya panchayats lacks the glamour of executive authority associated [illegible] and the panchayats. Secondly, the nyaya [illegible] ay T.A. and D.A. This is a positive [illegible] panch has always to travel to some village other than his own. Travelling in the rural areas is fairly time-consuming and bothersome even when members may be entitled to T.A. and D.A. The situation is worse when they have no such facility. Thirdly, a nyaya panch has to spend a good deal of time going and coming in attending the nyaya panchayat sittings. This must take a substantial part of his day's working hours. During certain periods it could be very difficult to attend these meetings, say, at the harvest season, or during marriages or when the man has got some other important domestic business.

One of the basic problems in the context of the nyaya panchayat is how to make the nyaya panchas take serious interest in their work. The following suggestions may be examined in this regard:

(i) It has been suggested that there should be some provision for payment to the members of nyaya panchayat for their services. Much can be said both for and against this suggestion. It may be argued that the panchayati raj institutions should be treated as an integrated whole. If the members of a nyaya panchayat were to be paid for their services how could the same be denied to the members of the panchayat, gram sabha, panchayat samiti or of the zila parishad. The usual practice all over has been that services of this type should be provided free of cost in the interest of the local community. The prestige that goes with the office should be treated as an adequate compensation in itself. Payment for services of this type at the local level is against the prevailing practice. This is also likely to crate a paid political bureaucracy with strong vested interests. Payment in lieu of the time that the nyaya panchas devote to the work of the panchayati raj institutions would thus be wrong both politically and financially. Politically, this will have a tendency to create a judicial bureaucracy which may make all efforts to continue in office even when its members have lost popular support. Financially, this may cost the tax payer heavily even when a small payment is to be made to the nyaya

panchas.[54]

There is the other side of the picture. We cannot justifiably dismiss the question of payment to the nyaya panchas on the ground that by tradition it had been an honorary office. The office of the nyaya panch today is not the traditional office; it has been given a formal and statutory basis. Traditionally, a nyaya panch was one of the panchas in a village respected for his age and social prestige. He would be asked to administer justice in his own village. Now it is an office with extended jurisdiction, specified responsibilities and a prescribed mode of selection. Under the new set up it is possible that a nyaya panch may not command the prestige which was enjoyed by his predecessor. Moreover with his extended obligations and area of jurisdiction he is to be compensated for the time that he has to give in dispensing justice in villages other than his own.

The arguments today for not remunerating the nyaya panch appear far stronger than the case for remunerating him and thus we are inclined to endorse the recommendations of the Nyaya Panchayat Report that "no salary or remuneration may be paid to nyaya panchas".[55]

(ii) There is, however, a strong case for liberal T.A. and D.A. rules. It may be expected from a villager that he would spare his time for the work of the nyaya panchayat. But it is certainly too much to expect that he should also spend money on travelling and other expenses out of his pocket. It is regrettable that instead of allowing T.A. and D.A. the Rajas-

54. The verdict of the nyaya panchayat report is worth recalling in this regard: "A few nyaya panchas have also suggested that they should be remunerated for their work. We have carefully considered the question. We are strongly against giving any remuneration or honorarium to nyaya panchas. Apart from the difficulty in calculating the proper remuneration and the consequential financial commitments or the likelihood of its abuse if based on working days, there is a strong reason why no remuneration should be given. The strong point of the institution is the honorary character of its personnel and this by itself engenders the confidence of the people in nyaya panchayats. A nyaya panch has to sit in judgment over fellow villagers and this duty cannot be performed satisfactorily if he loses the respect of the community which he is bound to do, if he were to be remunerated. The fact that the work of nyaya panch involves some self-sacrifice tends to promote in no small measure the respect of villagers for nyaya panchayats. We are happy to note that the vast majority of nyaya panchas whom we met expressed full agreement with this view." (vide: *The Nyaya Panchayat Report, op. cit*, p. 122.)

55. The Nyaya Panchayat Report : *op. cit.*, p. 129.

than Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat (General) Rules 1961 prohibit these in these words : "Notwithstanding the provision contained in rule 3 and 4, no T.A. or D.A. shall be admissible to any sarpanch or panch of panchayat or to any chairman or a member of nyaya panchayat for any of the purposes specified in rule 3 if the place to which he proceeds therefor lies within the panchayat circle or the nyaya circle, as the case may be."[56]

We strongly feel that the nyaya panchas should be paid T.A. and D.A. rather liberally. This is likely to go a long way in sustaining their interest in the work of the nyaya panchayat.[57]

It may be suggested that the nyaya panchas may be paid T.A. and D.A. as much as is permissible to sarpanchas today. If they are made to stay overnight by the chairman they may be paid full D.A. but, otherwise, at a half rate.

(iii) Once this has been done it may be worthwhile to prescribe that if a nyaya panch absents himself from a certain number of sittings he would be removed from the nyaya panchayat. It may be laid down in tune with other panchayati raj institutions in Rajasthan that if a nyaya panch absents himself from *five* consecutive meetings without the permission of the chairman his seat may be deemed to have fallen vacant. A notice may be sent to the defaulting nyaya panch after he has absented himself from four consecutive meetings saying that his membership would cease if he failed to turn up for the next meeting.

Delay in Disposal of Cases

It has come to our notice that nyaya panchayats take unduly long to decide cases. According to one of the research officers, the time taken for the disposal of criminal cases ranges from one to fifteen months. In another case it varies between three and

56 The Rajasthan Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat (General) Rules, 1961, Government Central Press, Jaipur, p. 2.

57. We may also recall in our support the view of the Nyaya Panchayat Report which reads : "The case for travelling allowance and other out of pocket allowance stands on a different footing. We feel that it is only reasonable that nyaya panchas [illegible]

pp. 120-121.)

twelve months. One of our research officers has given an interesting table which is reproduced below to show the period of delay in the disposal of work.

Table XXXI

Period	*Category of cases*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*Total*
Feb. 1961	Criminal	10	8	—	4	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	25
March 1962	Civil	5	11	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19
	Review	—	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
	Total	15	19	—	9	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	48
April 1962	Criminal	5	—	2	3	3	—	2	—	—	—	—	9	—	—	2	26
Dec. 1962	Civil	3	5	5	—	2	—	1	—	—	2	—	3	—	—	2	23
	Review	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	24
	Total	8	5	7	5	5	—	3	—	—	2	—	12	—	—	26	73
Feb. 1961	Criminal	15	8	2	7	4	1	3	—	—	—	—	9	—	—	2	51
Dec. 1962	Civil	8	16	5	3	2	—	1	—	—	2	—	3	—	—	2	42
	Review	—	—	—	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	28
	Total	23	24	7	14	8	1	4	—	—	2	—	12	—	—	26	121

The following table throws further light on the same aspect :

Table XXXII

S. No.	*Date of filing of the case*	*Date of judgment*	*Days taken*
1.	22-3-61	31-5-61	70
2.	22-3-61	17-1-62	301
3.	22-3-61	13-9-61	175
4.	22-3-61	13-9-61	175
5.	22-3-61	9-8-61	140
6.	22-3-61	16-4-61	35
7.	25-3-61	31-5-61	60
8.	27-3-61	14-6-61	80
9.	18-4-61	2-8-61	106
10.	24-4-61	9-8-61	107
11.	24-5-61	7-6-61	14

12.	7-6-61	9-8-61	63
13.	7-6-61	2-8-61	56
14.	7-6-61	23-8-61	77
15.	7-6-61	23-8-61	77
16.	14-6-61	2-8-61	49
17.	23-6-61	29-11-61	160
18.	29-6-61	29-11-61	183
19.	29-6-61	14-3-62	244
20.	5-7-61	13-9-61	70
21.	5-7-61	30-8-61	56
22.	16-7-61	29-11-61	136
23.	9-8-61	25-10-61	77
24.	30-8-61	20-9-61	21
25.	11-9-61	6-12-61	86
26.	20-9-61	17-1-62	119
27.	27-9-61	28-3-62	182
28.	25-10-61	22-11-61	28
29.	31-10-61	14-3-62	134
30.	12-12-61	14-2-62	64
31.	13-1-62	21-2-62	39
	New Cases from 1-4-62 to 31-1-63		
1.	2-5-62	27-6-62	50
2.	6-4-62	24-7-62	109
3.	20-4-62	26-9-62	524
4.	9-6-62	25-7-62	46
5.	13-6-62	26-9-62	95
6.	14-6-62	19-9-62	97
7.	1-8-62	22-8-62	21
8.	7-9-62	24-10-62	47
9.	12-9-62	24-10-62	42
10.	28-11-62	2-1-63	35

The delay in the disposal of cases by the nyaya panchayats is distressing. This causes great harassment and adversely affects the cause of justice as *justice delayed is justice denied*. If even the nyaya panchayat takes 15 months or so to decide a case the courts could not be accused of delay. The nyaya panchas have much less work compared with the courts. The delay is all the more regrettable when there are several benches to handle cases. One of the most important factors that may be responsible for

the delay is the lack of interest of its members in the work of the nyaya panchayat to which a detailed reference has been made.

The delay in the disposal of cases is a matter that calls for immediate attention. It should be statutorily laid down that a nyaya panchayat should not take more than two or three months in disposing of a case and it should be made an obligation of the B.D.O. to ensure that no unnecessary delay is caused.

Accumulation of Arrears

Closely related to the issue of delay is the question of the accumulation of arrears of cases in the nyaya panchayat. A statement showing the position of arrears in table XXXIII below speaks for itself :

Table XXXIII

(February 1961—December 1962)

Nyaya Panchayat	*No. of cases filed*	*No. of cases tried*	*Untried*
	1. Criminal Cases		
'J'	94	51	43
'S' (5-6-61 to 31-3-62)	6	5	1
	2. Civil Cases		
'J'	55	42	13
'S' (1-4-61 to 31-3-62)	45	31	14

In the course of about 22 months 94 criminal suits were filed with a nyaya panchayat of which only 51 were disposed of leaving a balance of 43 which works out at over 46 per cent of the total. In another instance, cases could be disposed of because the balance at the end of the year was only a little over 16 per cent. The situation appears to be better on the civil side compared to

the criminal side. The nyaya panchayat which had an arrear of 46 per cent of the criminal cases had only about 33 per cent civil cases in arrears. These figures do not warrant any generalisations. But it is certain that there is a tendency for arrears to accumulate. An early effort to discourage such a tendency will be helpful.

It may at the same time be pointed out that neither the delay nor the accumulation of arrears should be taken as a plea for discrediting the institution of nyaya panchayats. These shortcomings are to some extent natural and could be removed as the institution gets firmly rooted in the village soil and conditions are created to enable its members to feel more interested in their work. It should not be forgotten that the nyaya panchas are new to their work. The nyaya panchayats also have yet to build up traditions with regard to the procedure of work. The facilities of secretarial and clerical assistance have to be made available. The situation will improve when all this is done.

It may be suggested that a suitable training course for the nyaya panchas will greatly help the process of such improvement. The ten-day course now is hardly adequate. The training course should be long enough to allow them proper acquaintance with the various aspects of the substance and procedure of law which they are expected to administer. A three-month course may be suggested in this regard. It may not be possible for the nyaya panchas to be away for three months at a stretch. The course may, therefore, be split into three parts of one month each which they may be permitted to take at intervals. It may also be suggested that the nyaya panchas should be given adequate honorarium during the period of training as they would have to be away from their place of work for quite some time.

Anomaly of Concessions at Review Stage

After cases have been decided and the compliance is not forthcoming the nyaya panchayat re-opens the suit for consideration. Our research officers in the field have noted that a very large number of cases are re-opened by the nyaya panchayats by way of review. In one of the nyaya panchayats 34 cases were filed for review during one financial year of which compromise was reached in 33 cases between the parties. Thus at the reconsideration stage an understanding is arrived at in most cases failing which some penalty is imposed. A few critical observa-

tions need be made here. First, there will certainly be no harm in the panchayats becoming an instrument of bringing about compromise or conciliation in settling disputes. This will be a very desirable type of function—perhaps a measuring rod to judge the success of the institution itself. In fact, one of the complaints against the regular court of law has been that once a case is taken there it becomes too complex a matter procedurally to withdraw and effect an out of the court settlement. Nevertheless, such a compromise should he brought about by the nyaya panchayat in the first instance and not at the review stage lest it becomes disadvantageous rather than useful.

Secondly, the practice of concessions at the review stage is likely to affect the reputation of the nyaya panchayat as nobody would comply with the requirements of judgment in the hope that at the stage of reconsideration some concessions might be granted. Thirdly, this practice is against the accepted canons of judicial administration which demand that a court should not reconsider its own decision except for the correction of minor clerical errors. It is very necessary both in order to maintain decorum and in the interest of justice that once a judgment is delivered the chapter should be closed so far as the nyaya panchayat is concerned. The case may be taken in appeal, if the aggrieved party feels like doing so, in accordance with the provision of the Act. If the nyaya panchayats review a case because the guilty party is disinclined to comply with the decision it is doubly sad as it smacks more of expediency than of principle. When the parties refuse to comply with its decision the nyaya panchayat should resort to Section 34 of the Act and refer the matter to the S.D.O. asking him to realise the fine, as if it were imposed by him. This should be done in case the fine or compensation ordered by nyaya panchayat to be paid remains unpaid for a fortnight.

It is contended here that the efforts at conciliation should be made by the nyaya panchayat in the first instance and not at the review stage. Also, a case should not be reviewed simply because the decision of the nyaya panchayat has not been complied with. If this trend persists it is likely to damage the prestige of nyaya panchayat severely. If the review is considered desirable the objective should not be to allow concessions to the parties acting as pressure groups but to re-examine whether justice had been administered appropriately or there had been miscarri-

age of justice somewhere. It would be much better if the review was more on a point of law than on the issue whether the punishment awarded had been just or not. The best course is that the nyaya panchayats should not have the power to review their own judgments.

Dilemma of Executing Nyaya Panchayat Orders

Closely related is the problem of executing nyaya panchayat decisions. This has engaged the attention of our research officers. The nyaya panchayats have to depend either on the S.D.O. or some other subordinate executive agency for the execution of their decisions. Very often adequate cooperation is not received from these agencies. It is feared that since nyaya panchayat decisions are likely to take very long for execution people may prefer to take the cases to the courts where they are hopeful of early execution. This problem does not admit of an easy solution. It would be rather ridiculous to recommend that each nyaya panchayat should have its own machinery for enforcing its decisions. Even the High Court or the Supreme Court does not have such a machinery. Therefore reliance is to be placed on the good sense of the implementing agencies. A maximum time limit of a fortnight or three weeks for execution of the nyaya panchayat orders may be prescribed through the rules by the government. This might serve as safeguards against undue delay by the implementing agencies. An effort should also be made to evolve a system of incentives (whether monetary or otherwise in the form of good entries in service book etc.) so that the executive agencies may feel encouraged to take interest in the execution of nyaya panchayat decisions.

Procedural Bottlenecks

The study of the functional aspect of the nyaya panchayat will not be complete without a reference to some of the procedural bottlenecks to which attention has been drawn by our research officers and by the inspecting magistrate in one of the nyaya panchayats in his report. The report of the inspecting magistrate, besides pointing out other shortcomings[58] in the

58. Other defects pointed out by him have been: (i) that one of the members [illegible] person [illegible] ient [illegible] ixed for hearing no hearing takes place and new dates are given; and (iv) that the disposal of the cases was slow.

working of the nyaya panchayat, laid special stress on procedural irregularities. One of the important procedural shortcomings has been the defective maintenance of registers and, in certain cases, no maintenance of registers at all. Our research officers have noted that it takes quite long to serve the summons on the parties. The administrative bottlenecks can be removed if the staffing pattern of the nyaya panchayat is improved on the lines suggested earlier. The system of inspection by the magistrates should also be strengthened to discover administrative bottlenecks and suggest ways and means for removing them.

Extension of Jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayats

It has very often been suggested that the jurisdiction of the nyaya panchayats may be extended. The proposal is made for different purposes. Sometimes it is made with a view to augmenting the resources of nyaya panchayats while at others this is suggested to make the nyaya panchayats more respectable than what they are today. So far as the question of augmenting the resources is concerned the extension of jurisdiction is hardly the way to do it. The nyaya panchayats are already facing serious difficulties in the quick disposal of cases. Even under very favourable circumstances sometimes it takes about three to four months to decide the cases. Thus we are of the opinion that the extension of jurisdiction is not desirable at present; more so because the nyaya panchayats may not have the legal acumen and training to cope with extended jurisdiction.

However as an experiment the nyaya panchayat may be allowed to deal with civil suits involving up to Rs. 500 if the parties agree. If this is done the right to appeal should certainly be allowed to the parties which agree to this experiment. But no extension of jurisdiction on the criminal side is desirable.

The Lurking Dangers

It may worthwhile in the end to refer to some of the lurking dangers which have not as yet been brought out by our empirical enquiry but which have the potentiality to become problem areas in the future. The more important of these are mentioned below.

Prospects of Partiality in Justice

Our research officers have not reported any concrete case where the nyaya panchayats had taken a clearly partial view.

The number of appeals preferred against the decision of the nyaya panchayat is also quite insignificant. This may partly be due to the excessive use of the power of revision by the nyaya panchayat. Still this can also be taken as indicating the confidence that nyaya panchayat decisions have by and large inspired in rural India. But as the office of the nyaya panch is elective, and that too indirectly, there is a possibility of the nyaya panchayat becoming a tool in the hands of the political clique that may install the nyaya panch in office. At least one of our research officers has expressed serious concern at this possibility and it should not be dismissed summarily. What is necessary is to keep a careful watch so that necessary safeguards may be provided in case the lurking possibility of partiality in the administration of justice becomes a reality.

Cases of Harassment

During talks which the Deputy Director had with some of the nyaya panchas it was made out that there were some villagers who would file cases just to harass fellow villagers as it does not cost them much to go to a nyaya panchayat. Our research officers in the field have not noticed this trend which again should be carefully watched.

Fear of Competition with Courts

One of our research officers is of the opinion that the work of the nyaya panchayat suffers because of the competition with courts He has observed that sometimes when a villager is in a position to take the case either to the nyaya panchayat or to a court of law he prefers the latter. He is, therefore, afraid that the nyaya panchayats may stand in competition with the courts which may become their rivals. Two other research officers have not noted this trend. It may be worthwhile to point out that the only safeguard in this regard can be a tradition of impartial justice and quick disposal of work that the nyaya panchas should try to build up to gain the confidence of the village people. Such a tradition coupled with the prospects of cheap and quick justice will enable the nyaya panchayats to stand in competition with the courts.

Summing Up

In sum, the institution of nyaya panchayat is today the least controversial of the panchayati raj institutions. It is also per-

haps one of those institutions which commands both prestige and confidence of the villagers. The defects and shortcomings associated with the institution of the nyaya panchayats as detailed above are largely administrative and procedural and, as such, are within the orbit of administrative improvement. Efforts should be made to see that the administration of nyaya panchayats, both financial and procedural, is streamlined soon so that the institution gains in internal strength to sustain the confidence and prestige the villagers have reposed in the institution. Extra care should be taken to ensure that politics for power which has already started vitiating other panchayati raj institutions does not affect the nyaya panchayats. It is in this context that it has been a happy step that judicial functions were taken away from the panchayats and entrusted with a separate institution *i.e.*, the nyaya panchayats. Previously when judicial and executive functions were combined in the panchayat the chances of politics for power corrupting the judicial side of its activity were far greater than what they are today when there exist nyaya panchayats as separate custodians of justice. We, therefore, view the establishment of nyaya panchayats as a separate institution with no regrets and strongly feel that the restoration of judicial functions to the panchayats (as has been demanded in some quarters in the name of improving the financial resources of the panchayats) will be a retrograde step with detrimental potentialities for the cause of justice.

IX

Panchayati Raj Finance

THE problems of economic viability and financial administration of the panchayati raj institutions assume a special significance in the context of the responsibilities for promoting economic development which have been devolved upon them. The panchayati raj institutions, more especially the panchayat samitis in the Rajasthan pattern, are called upon to operate a number of schemes relating to economic development and also participate in the process of plan formulation. In fact what generated the concept of democratic decentralisation was the gradual slowing down of the tempo of the community development programme and, particularly, the inability of the loose combination of officials and non-officials in the block advisory committee to enthuse the people and secure their participation. The *ad hoc* and advisory bodies were replaced by permanent panchayati raj institutions for the better fulfilment of the objectives of the community development programme. One of the significant corollaries of telescoping community development into panchayati raj is that the panchayati raj institutions have inherited the financial arrangements made under the former scheme. This fact is important in as much as the community development programme was mainly concentrated at a single operational level *viz.*, the community development block, while panchayati raj has been designed as an interlocked three-tier structure of panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad. Under the institutional pattern adopted in Rajasthan the panchayat samiti's jurisdiction has been made co-terminal with the community development block area and the entire community development staff and schematic budget has been placed at the

disposal of the panchayat samiti. In other words the panchayat samitis have been automatically ensured a minimum of financial resources out of the community development funds while the other two tiers have been financed in a different manner, as detailed later.

Though panchayati raj has been linked with the community development, the finances for the panchayati raj institutions do not flow only from the community development funds. But as 'executive agents' for 'transferred scheme' they receive grants, grants-in-aid and loans from the government and as 'self-governing institutions' these are authorised to levy taxes and collect a number of fees. The community development funds are directly made available to the panchayat samitis. While the government financial assistance is made available at all the three levels, the taxation powers have been granted only to the panchayats and panchayat samitis. The zila parishads in the Rajasthan panchayati raj pattern are mainly financed through state funds. The panchayats draw resources from the state as well as from their own tax efforts and also receive assistance from the panchayat samiti. The panchayat samitis are the recipients of state aid, community development funds and their own tax revenues.

The financing patterns of the three panchayati raj institutions thus vary from one another and the financial provision at each level differs considerably from the other.

At Panchayat Level

The sources of panchayat income are as follows :

(i) *Grants from the state government :* Every panchayat receives a grant of 20 paise per capita out of the land revenue proceeds subject to a maximum of Rs. 400. This is a general purpose grant mainly utilised for meeting the establishment expenses. At the time of the panchayat elections in December, 1960, the state government had announced a grant of 25 paise per capita to the panchayats where the sarpanch and 80% of the panchas were elected unanimously. Besides these grants which are directly made available to the panchayats, a number of state grants and grants-in-aid are made available through the panchayat samitis.

(ii) *Tax revenues :* The panchayats have been authorised to levy the following taxes though none of them has been made

compulsory : (a) house tax; (b) octroi; (c) vehicle tax; (d) pilgrim tax ; (e) a tax for arranging the supply of drinking water; (f) tax on commercial crops; and (g) a special tax on the adult male members of the panchayat area for the construction of any public work of general utility (*"vikas tax"*).

Any panchayat which desires to levy any of the above taxes (or to enhance the existing rates thereof) is required to affix a notice on its notice-board giving all the relevant details and inviting objections. After considering the objections it may approve the tax proposals with or without modifications as it deems fit.

The panchayat prepares the assessment and sends a demand notice to the persons liable to taxation. If any such person fails to deposit the tax dues within fifteen days the sarpanch can get a warrant of attachment issued and arrange for the sale of the movable property of the defaulter as provided in the law. It has also been provided that any person who has not paid for two months the arrears on account of any tax or fee imposed by a panchayat shall not be eligible to contest the election for membership of the panchayat.

The state government has prescribed certain rules and regulations about the rates and manner of assessment of some of the taxes which can be levied by the panchayat. For example, with regard to the tax on buildings, the following maximum rates based on the value of the building have been prescribed.

Table XXXIV

(*Rupees*)

Value of the building[59]	*Maximum amount of tax*
Below 1000	2
1000— 2000	3
2000— 5000	7
5000—10000	15
Above 10000	25

59. All buildings valued at less than five hundred rupees are exempted from the tax.

One of the most controversial taxes is the so-called *'vikas tax'*, a special tax for the construction of any public work of general utility, which can be collected either in cash or kind (physical labour). The rates for this compulsory levy have not been specified and the panchayats are free to fix their own rates.

(iii) *Non-tax revenues :* The panchayats also receive income from the following sources : (a) court fees and fines imposed by the nyaya panchayats; (b) other fines and fees including cattle pound and licence fees; (c) service charges including irrigation fees; (d) grazing charges; (e) proceeds from the sale of abadi lands; and (f) contributions and donations.

The rates for these non-tax revenues have not been prescribed and different panchayats placed in different circumstances receive varying amounts of income. Besides not being uniform, revenues under these heads are irregular and generally negligible except from the sale of abadi lands and fines and fees from cattle pounds. As far as irrigation fees and grazing charges are concerned the income from these sources is available only to those panchayats which have been handed over the charge of minor irrigation works and grazing lands respectively. The number of such panchayats is small. Moreover, most of the panchayats do not have effective control of the grazing fields allotted to them and are facing difficulty in removing unauthorised encroachments from pasture lands.

On the expenditure side the panchayats have to spend on a variety of items among which establishment charges and development expenditure predominate. According to the Rajasthan Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat (General) Rules, 1961, no panchayat can spend more than 40% of its total receipts on establishment and must maintain a minimum working balance of 20% of the estimated receipts. Keeping within these prescribed limits the panchayats can budget for the rest of 40% (or more) of its receipts on development activities including sanitation, water supply, lighting, primary education, agriculture, village industries and a number of social and cultural activities.

The panchayat budget framed according to this formula has to be sent to the panchayat samiti for approval by February. The panchayat samitis generally delegate the power of the scrutiny of the panchayat budgets to the standing committee on finance.

Within the framework of the above financial provisions most of the panchayats in the three panchayat samitis under study are in a poor plight. On the one hand the income of most of the panchayats is very little and on the other they find it difficult to defray even the minimum establishment charges.

Income Pattern

The following table, should serve as a kind of preface to a comparative understanding of the income pattern of the three panchayats which we have studied.

Table XXXV

(Rupees)

Item	'D'		'C'		'G'	
	Total	*Per capita*	*Total*	*Per capita*	*Total*	*Per capita*
I Grants and contributions						
(a) Statutory	397.00	0,49	N.A.	—	397.00	0.08
(b) Others	—		N.A.	—	40.00	0.01
II Taxes & fees						
(a) Taxes	329.00	0.41	3.00	0.02	83.00	0.01
(b) Non-tax revenue	75.00	0.09	424.00	0.27	532.00	0.11
III Income from property	86.00	0.10	—	—	1716.00	0.34
IV Miscellaneous	770.00	0.96	290,00	0.19	187.00	0.04
	1657.00	2.07	717.00	0.48	2955.00	0.60

The major source of a panchayat's income is the per capita grant which is subject to a maximum of Rs. 400 and this does provide a steady flow of minimum income to all panchayats. Most of the non-officials connected with panchayati raj feel that

the panchayats should be given a larger share of land revenue or, alternatively, argue that the function of collection of land revenue should be entrusted to the panchayats so that they may be able to augment their income by collecting the commission for performing this task. This is a matter of national and state policy. Obviously no decision can be taken in this connection without looking into all aspects of these proposals. Considering the present organisational deficiencies and political environment in which the panchayats operate a go-slow policy would appear to be justified. It may be further suggested that the experiment of grouping the panchayats into three or four categories should be tried and the panchayats which give evidence of sound organisational and financial planning entrusted with the task of land revenue collection.

As far as tax-revenues of the panchayats are concerned they do not show any progressive tendency because of the reluctance of the popularly elected panchas and sarpanchas to levy taxes and incur the people's opposition. Though the Rajasthan Government and the high government officers enthusiastically campaign for the imposition of taxes by the panchayats, the response of the non-officials is far from encouraging. The question of imposing taxes very often comes up for discussion at panchayat meetings but the issue is generally evaded. A decision is postponed after a general discussion on the intensity of existing tax burden and rise in prices. Occasionally some panchayats are able to collect revenue from taxes, the primary burden of which falls on outsiders. The example of such taxes are octroi, pilgrim and cycle tax. The so-called cycle tax is the annual licence fee charged for registration of cycles. Panchayats situated near big cities like Jaipur are able to derive a steady income from this source as many city dwellers prefer to take cycle licences from the neighbouring panchayats where licence fees are lesser than in the city. The practice, however, leads to legal and jurisdictional disputes between the panchayats and the municipalities and often the city traffic authorities refuse to recognise the panchayat cycle tokens as valid. Tax on commercial crops is another fruitful source of income but in the sample panchayat samitis under our study commercial crops (chillies, cotton, sugarcane, *zeera*, and groundnut) are not ample. In actual practice most of the panchayats do not receive any significant revenue on this account.

The Rajasthan Government is constantly urging the pancha-

yats to levy a *vikas tax* to be collected in the form of cash or labour contributions from each adult resident of the panchayat area for special activities like the construction of panchayat *ghar* (office) or some other locally beneficial public works. Though many panchayats are able to get the people to contribute in cash or labour to useful local public works, the idea of a compulsory levy or tax has not gained acceptance and most of the *shramdan* offered is based on custom rather than on the legal provisions of the Panchayat Act.

Many panchayats draw small but steady non-tax revenues on account of the fines and fees imposed by the panchayat and the operation of cattle pounds. Another source of regular income is the lease for removal and collection of bones of dead animals in the panchayat area granted on an annual contract basis to the highest bidder. Still another source of non-tax revenue is the sale of abadi land placed at the disposal of the panchayats by the state government for encouraging urban housing and other non-agricultural purposes. In Rajasthan the state government is proprietary-owner of a large portion of non-agricultural land and the panchayats are expected to dispose off state land according to the rules and regulations made by the government. However, most of the panchayats are openly and flagrantly violating these rules and regulations in selling abadi land at ridiculously low rates and utilising the proceeds for current expenditure on administration and establishment etc. The practice is unsound from the point of view of laws of economics and also leads to charges of favouritism. The state government should take immediate steps to check it and ensure that funds obtained by the sale of capital assets are not utilised for current expenses but set apart for undertaking capital-building activities.

Most of the panchayats in the three panchayat samitis under study received no substantial income from the management of property as they possessed no suitable property except the abadi land.

Thus, considering all the income sources, the panchayats are in a poor economic plight. They are often unable to meet the minimum administrative expenses let alone initiate any development schemes. With constant paucity of funds the panchayats rely on the panchayat samiti for the execution of development schemes in their area and keenly compete with one another to get

as many grants from the panchayat samitis as possible. Whatever development schemes are undertaken by the panchayats are largely financed by the panchayat samiti either out of its own funds or community development schematic budget or grants from the state government. The total income from all these sources is barely sufficient to meet the establishment expenses of the panchayats. Besides operating a cattle pond and contributing towards various socio-cultural activities the panchayats depend entirely on the panchayat samiti for locating development projects in their area and providing the necessary financial and technical assistance. The panchyats, in other words, receive considerable funds for carrying out development schemes on behalf of the panchayat samiti. The panchayats also receive grants and grants-in-aid to be further distributed in the panchayat as agricultural *taccavi*, non-agricultural loans and subsidies for various specified purposes. All these funds are placed at the disposal of the panchayats which have to maintain the accounts and submit the necessary reports to the panchayat samiti. Thus, while the panchayats have meagre incomes, their financial transactions are quite ample and this poses the question of accounting and auditing which have not so far received adequate attention. The panchayats are statutorily required to follow the relevant financial (accounts and audit) rules of the government but in actual practice most of t funds is placed at the disposal of the sarpanch, many of who do not hesitate to put it to personal use. The sarpanchas a able to get away with several financial irregularities as t panchayat accounts are not audited annually and regularly. Despite all the rules and regulations concerning panchayat funds financial administration is very lax and unsound. In almost eve panchayat one comes across rumours and allegations of embezzlement and deflections on the part of the sarpanchas. The stat government finds it difficult to institute a probe in such cases Many state officials point out that most of such charges are politically inspired and are meant to harm people politically rathe than to improve panchayat administration. The panchayat sami and the zila parishad so far have not assumed the mantle o financial watch-dogs. As the sarpanchas constitute the panchaya samiti the prospects of the panchayat samiti exercising regular an detailed financial control over the panchayats do not appear t be very bright. In the ultimate analysis, the state governme will have to evolve newer and better ways and means of ensurin

proper financial supervision over the popularly elected bodies situated in far-flung areas and not equipped with post offices or government treasuries and sub-treasuries This constitutes one of the greatest administrative challenges of panchayati raj that must be met without either stultifying the panchayats' autonomy or sacrificing the government's responsibility

Expenditure Pattern

With meagre financial resources and in the absence of any regular control on a panchayat's expenditure policy except what is embodied in the 'budget formula' previously referred to, the major proportion of the panchayat's income is spent on establishment including the salary and allowances of its secretary and peon and payment of T A and D A to panchayat members when on official tour outside their area In the case of panchayats operating cattle pounds, information rooms, library reading rooms and other services, the remuneration of the operators or the persons in charge are also included in the establishment expenses After meeting these expenses a majority of the panchayats have very little left for other activities In the case of panchayats having surplus funds the major head of expenditure relates to social and cultural activities such as operating library and reading rooms, maintenance of radio sets seasonal contributions to local cultural associations like dramatic and singing troupes and arrangements in connection with traditional festivals Only a few panchayats are able to spend anything substantial on civic amenities local development schemes and the like For executing such schemes the panchayats generally rely on the financial assistance from the panchayat samiti as supplemented by people s participation in the form of labour or cash The observations made here can be meaningfully interpreted with the help of Table XXXVI

At Panchayat Samiti Level

The panchayat samitis occupy a crucial position in the panchayati raj set-up in Rajasthan The sources of panchayat samiti finances are (a) community development schematic budget funds, (b) departmental grants, and (c) taxes and other non-tax revenue

With the decision to introduce panchayati raj the entire community development funds were placed at the disposal of the

Table XXXVI

(*Rupees*)

Item	'D'		'C'		'G'	
	Total	*Per capita*	*Total*	*Per capita*	*Total*	*Per capita*
1. Administration	534	0.67	547	0.36	1233	0.27
2. Civic Amenities	—		—	—	618	0.13
3. Social & Cultural activities	187	0.22	74	0.05	403	0.08
4. Construction	—	—	30	0.02	82	0.00
5. Maintenance	25	0.31	66	0.04	407	0.08
6. Miscellaneous	420	0.52	—	—	113	0.02
	1166	1.44	717	0.47	2846	0.58

panchayat samitis to be spent according to the block schematic budget. Since the general expenditure pattern of the community development funds is laid down in advance the panchayat samitis do not enjoy any discretion in the utilisation of the community development funds except the power of transferring expenditure from one subhead to a minor head.

The community development funds are made available for the following major heads : eastablishment, animal husbandry, agriculture (extension), health and rural sanitation, irrigation, social education, communication, rural arts and crafts and social welfare. The funds are spent according to the schemes and projects proposed by the concerned extension officer and approved by the panchayat samiti. In the annual budget presented to the panchayat samiti the receipt as well as expenditure of community development funds is clearly and separately shown, though in actual practice most of the members are not able to differenti-

ate between community development funds and departmental funds.

A key problem likely to arise in the case of panchayat samiti finances is the non-availability of community development funds as the block enters the post-stage II phase.[60] As present arrangements in Rajasthan stand no clear picture is available of the financing of the panchayat samitis which are in post-stage II block and have exhausted the community development schematic budgetary resources. It is essential that this aspect of panchayati raj finances is subjected to an immediate probe and satisfactory alternatives worked out in order to maintain continuity in the flow of funds for rural development.

Besides the community development funds each panchayat samiti receives financial assistance from the state government by way of departmental grants to cover the expenses of transferred schemes which, prior to the introduction of the panchayati raj, were being administered directly by various government departments but are now executed by the panchayat samitis with the help of their own technical staff (*i.e.*, the extension officers) under the guidance of departmental, district and state level officers.

These 'departmental grants' are thus 'tied' grants made available only for those schemes and projects which the departments had been operating before the introduction of panchayati raj or for those to which they have given 'technical approval'. These grants form part of the departmental budget and the panchayat samitis receive such amounts as are indicated by the departments. Of course the panchayat samitis are free to demand larger grants from any department but generally they have no choice but to spend whatever amounts are made available. Under the scheme of 'planning from below' an effort was made to draw up a five-year plan of the likely availability of funds to the panchayat samitis from various departments. But the practical utility of this scheme has been rather little. In the first place the five-yearly estimates were not very precise. Secondly, the panchayat samitis which had then just come into being were in no position to correctly assess their needs and forcefully assert their demands. Moreover, the original five-year plan estimates underwent drastic changes on two occasions; first, when the state

60. This point has been ably developed by the Santhanam Committee in its report on *Panchayati Raj Resources*, Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, Government of India, 1964. pp. 26-31.

Table XXXVI

(*Rupees*)

Item	'D'		'C'		'G'	
	Total	*Per capita*	*Total*	*Per capita*	*Total*	*Per capita*
1. Administration	534	0.67	547	0.36	1233	0.27
2. Civic Amenities	—		—	—	618	0.13
3. Social & Cultural activities	187	0.22	74	0.05	403	0.08
4. Construction	-	-	30	0.02	82	0.00
5. Maintenance	25	0.31	66	0.04	407	0.08
6. Miscellaneous	420	0.52	—	—	113	0.02
	1166	1.44	717	0.47	2846	0.58

panchayat samitis to be spent according to the block schematic budget. Since the general expenditure pattern of the community development funds is laid down in advance the panchayat samitis do not enjoy any discretion in the utilisation of the community development funds except the power of transferring expenditure from one subhead to a minor head.

The community development funds are made available for the following major heads : eastablishment, animal husbandry, agriculture (extension), health and rural sanitation, irrigation, social education, communication, rural arts and crafts and social welfare. The funds are spent according to the schemes and projects proposed by the concerned extension officer and approved by the panchayat samiti. In the annual budget presented to the panchayat samiti the receipt as well as expenditure of community development funds is clearly and separately shown, though in actual practice most of the members are not able to differenti-

ate between community development funds and departmental funds.

A key problem likely to arise in the case of panchayat samiti finances is the non-availability of community development funds as the block enters the post-stage II phase.[60] As present arrangements in Rajasthan stand no clear picture is available of the financing of the panchayat samitis which are in post-stage II block and have exhausted the community development schematic budgetary resources. It is essential that this aspect of panchayati raj finances is subjected to an immediate probe and satisfactory alternatives worked out in order to maintain continuity in the flow of funds for rural development.

Besides the community development funds each panchayat samiti receives financial assistance from the state government by way of departmental grants to cover the expenses of transferred schemes which, prior to the introduction of the panchayati raj, were being administered directly by various government departments but are now executed by the panchayat samitis with the help of their own technical staff (*i.e.*, the extension officers) under the guidance of departmental, district and state level officers.

These 'departmental grants' are thus 'tied' grants made available only for those schemes and projects which the departments had been operating before the introduction of panchayati raj or for those to which they have given 'technical approval'. These grants form part of the departmental budget and the panchayat samitis receive such amounts as are indicated by the departments. Of course the panchayat samitis are free to demand larger grants from any department but generally they have no choice but to spend whatever amounts are made available. Under the scheme of 'planning from below' an effort was made to draw up a five-year plan of the likely availability of funds to the panchayat samitis from various departments. But the practical utility of this scheme has been rather little. In the first place the five-yearly estimates were not very precise. Secondly, the panchayat samitis which had then just come into being were in no position to correctly assess their needs and forcefully assert their demands. Moreover, the original five-year plan estimates underwent drastic changes on two occasions; first, when the state

60. T[illegible] by the Santhanam Committee in its report [illegible] Community Development and Cooperation, [illegible]

plan of Rs. 236 crores was divided into a 'core' plan of Rs. 208 crores and a non-core plan and, secondly, when a re-allocation of funds was necessitated by the declaration of national emergency towards the end of 1962. The state plan itself has thus been subjected to a number of cuts and re-allocations thereby confusing the overall financing pattern. This has made year-to-year planning and allocation of funds still more rough and imprecise. As a result of all this the panchayat samitis do not have a clear idea of the likely availability of annual departmental grants.

The actual administrative process governing the departmental grants is so complicated that in many cases the panchayat samitis either do not receive the indicated grants or receive them too late. The irregularity or late intimation of grants poses many problems for the panchayat samitis in the budgetary process virtually reducing it to a ritual. The administrative bottlenecks in the way of departmental grants are clearly reflected in the "March fever" gripping the panchayat samitis. Owing to the vagaries of financial administration the panchayat samitis do not have a clear idea of the total funds at their disposal till quite late in the financial year. Consequently a large proportion of the panchayat samiti expenditure is concentrated towards the end of the financial year, in March. Expenditure figures of one panchayat samiti are given below to show the extent of the malady.

Table XXXVII

(*Rupees*)

Month	*Expenditure*
1962 : April	38,403
May	38,244
June	26,679
July	37,757
August	56,614
September	52,400
October	75,903
November	16,801
December	58,988
1963 : January	87,313
February	52,930
March	2,65,431

Besides the 'tied' grants for specific schemes or projects government departments from time to time make available a number of tied and a few untied 'grants-in aid and subsidies to be spent by the panchayat samiti. The social welfare department, for example, distributes a fairly large sum as grant-in aid for the construction of wells for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes The animal husbandry department makes available subsidies for owners or breeders of pedigree stock In case of such sums the panchayat samiti has only to distribute funds to the eligible individuals or institutions and arrange for the people s matching participation in terms of cash or labour

Besides the community development funds and departmental grants, the panchayat samitis have been entrusted with a number of tax and other revenue sources which yield considerable income This is referred to as panchayat samiti s 'own income denoting that it is free to utilise this portion of the revenue as is deemed fit by the majority at its general meetings The main sources of a panchayat samiti s 'own income are tax revenues income from appeals and other non-tax revenues, income from property, and miscellaneous income

The Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, has empowered the panchayat samitis to levy the following taxes

(a) A tax on the rent payable for use or occupation of agricultural land

(b) A tax on the rent received by any land holder on account of use or occupation of agricultural land

(c) A tax on the assumed rental value of agricultural land in case no rent is payable [61]

(d) A tax on trades, callings, professions and industries

(e) A surcharge on stamp duty on transfer of immovable property

(f) A primary education cess

(g) A tax in respect of panchayat samiti fairs

The taxes mentioned under (a) to (c) are subject to general or special orders of the State Government The Rajasthan Panchayat

61 The rate for all the three taxes has been fixed at five paise per rupee It has been further prescribed that none of these three taxes can be imposed alone, if any one is sought to be imposed the other two shall also have to be levied simultaneously

Samitis Taxation Rules, 1960, have laid down the procedure for the imposition and collection of panchayat samiti taxes. Whenever any of the taxes is intended to be imposed the panchayat samiti has to pass a resolution, invite objections and consider them after the expiry of the period of notice *i.e.*, one month. If the panchayat samiti still intends to impose the tax (or taxes) it has to pass another resolution. In case of the remaining taxes it has to seek prior sanction of the state government through the Joint Development Commissioner, Development Department.

Having imposed the tax the panchayat samiti has to rely on the tehsildar and the patwari for its realisation along with the land revenue. The revenue agencies have been made responsible for the collection of taxes on rent of the agricultural land, primary education cess and the taxes on trades, callings, professions and industries. For collecting the tax on fairs, etc. the panchayat samiti has to make its own arrangements by establishing suitable registration, collection and checking agencies. In case of the surcharge on stamp duty the registrar or sub-registrar of various courts act as collection authorities.

The government has prescribed the maximum annual rate for the tax on trades, callings professions and industries.

Among the non-tax revenues the income lease or contract for the collection of bones and carcasses and income from appeals are the major and steady sources of income for the panchayat samiti. Besides, some panchayat samitis are able to derive sizeable revenues from property management and miscellaneous sources, such as, sale of the produce of nurseries.

Our Experience

Table XXXVIII reveals the income of three panchayat samitis under study.

Table XXXVIII

Panchayat samiti	*Block stage*	*Total income (Rs. 000)*	*Total population (000)*	*Per capita income (Rs.)*
'D'	pre-ext.	691.0	103	6.7
'J'	II	499.9	47	10.6
'S'	I	471.0	75	6.3

The consolidated income figures for 1961-62 for the three panchayat samitis under study are given below:

Table XXXIX

(*Rs. 000*)

Items	'D' *Total*	'D' *Per capita*	'J' *Total*	'J' *Per capita*	'S' *Total*	'S' *Per capita*
1. Land revenue and miscellaneous revenue	61.8	0.60	12.5	0.20	37.7	0.5
2. Management	21.8	0.21	77.0	1.61	16.0	0.2
3. Agriculture and animal husbandry	34.8	0.33	24.6	0.52	19.3	0.2
4. Irrigation and reclamation	—	—	2.8	0.06	4.5	0.0
5. Health and rural sanitation	10.1	0.10	15.2	0.32	14.8	0.1
6. Education	139.4	1.35	157.4	3.34	162.3	2.1
7. Social education	2.0	0.01	10.8	0.23	4.6	0.1
8. Communications	1.5	0.01	3.6	0.07	10.4	0.0
9. Cooperation	7.4	0.07	3.2	0.07	—	0.1
10. Industries	—	0.07	46.9	0.99		—
11. Social welfare	7.5	0.07	3.1	0.06	31.6	0.4
12. Taxes	26.9	0.26	7.1	0.16	23.0	0.3
13. Loans and deposits	314.6	3.05	124.9	2.65	67.1	0.9
14. Others	67.9	0.66	10.8	0.23		0.1

As already stated a panchayat samiti's income is derived from three sources: community development funds, departmental grants and 'own income'. The most noteworthy feature of the three panchayat samitis under study is that the tax revenue yields are relatively very little as would be clear from the following table :

Table XL

Panchayat samiti	*Total income* (*Rs. 000*)	*Population* (*000*)	*Tax income* (*Rs.*)	*Per capita income* (*Rs.*)	*Per capita tax income* (*Rs.*)
'D'	696.0	103	26.9	6.7	0.26
'J'	499.9	47	7.1	10.6	0.16
'S'	471,0	75	23.0	6.3	0.30

The tax effort of the three panchayat samitis yield as little as 26, 16 and 30 paise per capita respectively. This shows that the panchayat samitis are not in an economically viable position as far as self-financing is concerned.

From time to time panchayat samitis do make an effort to impose taxes mainly at the instance of the state and panchayat samiti officials. But the panchayati raj non-officials seem to be reluctant to earn the unpopularity attached with the imposition of taxes. One of the three panchayat samitis under study has provided a very apt illustration of this situation as it discussed, postponed, evaded and shelved a tax proposition for well over a year (the entire story has been recapitulated in the Appendix to this chapter). A related illustration has been drawn from another panchayat samiti where the finance and taxation standing committee met on December 1, 1961 to consider the objections to the tax proposals announced by the panchayat samiti wherein the tax rates were drastically reduced. This is more specifically true in regard to the trade and profession tax levied on money lenders and shopkeepers at the following rates:

Table XLI

Tax	*Rate* (*per annum*) *Rs.*
Tax on money lenders	
(a) (Those having a working capital between Rs. 1000 & 5000)	50
(b) Over Rs. 5000	150
(a) Retail shopkeepers	12
(b) Retail-cum-cloth merchant	50
(c) Wholesalers	150

The standing committee received a delegation of 10 persons who protested against such excessive rate of taxation. It consisted, among others, of an up-sarpanch of one of the constituent panchayats who pleaded for a reduction in the rates. Despite some opposition on the part of the vikas adhikari the delegation was able to secure a revision in the tax proposal as follows:

Table XLII

Tax	*Rate*
Tax on money lenders having working capital (Rs.)	Rs.
(a) 1—1000	Nil
(b) 1000-10000	20
(c) Above 10000	50
Tax on shopkeepers	
(a) Retail dealers	6
(b) Others	12

A comparison of the original and revised tax proposals would show that in the case of money lenders an exemption has been introduced for a turnover of less than Rs. 1000 which was absent in the original proposals. The second slab has been extended up to Rs. 100,00 and a maximum of Rs. 50 has been provided. Whereas in the original scheme those having a turnover of more than Rs. 5000 were subject to Rs. 150 as tax, in the revised schedule those having a turnover of more than Rs. 10,000 were required to pay only Rs. 50. Similarly, in the case of shopkeepers not only the tax rates were halved but the distinction of retail dealers, retail-cum-cloth dealers and wholesalers has also been abolished.

This did not mean the end of the trouble as moneylending is a secret activity and it proved very difficult to collect the tax. The panchayat samiti did try to secure compulsory registration of all moneylenders but failed and, in the absence of accurate information about the base, no assessment of the tax was possible. These administrative difficulties could have been surmounted but right from the beginning the non-officials started with a prejudice against taxation and hence did not take any effective steps to collect the tax dues.

The panchayat samitis are required to spend their fund on a

variety of items as revealed by the tabulated statement on expenditure of the three panchayat samitis studied.

Table XLII (a)

Item	*'D'*		*'J'*		*'S'*	
	Total Rs. 000	*Per capita*	*Total Rs. 000*	*Per capita*	*Total Rs. 000*	*Per capita*
1. Land revenue and miscellaneous revenue	—	—	12.1	0.26	1.8	0.02
2. Management	51.0	0.49	76.6	1.41	92.4	1.24
3. Agriculture and animal husbandry	26.5	0.25	16.4	0.35	28.6	0.38
4. Irrigation and reclamation	—	—	—	—	9.5	0.12
5. Health and sanitation	9.9	0.8	9.5	0.21	187.0	2.59
6. Education	173.0	1.70	100.2	2.12	14.6	0.13
7. Social education	6.5	0.06	5.7	0.12	14.7	0.13
8. Communications	1.1	0.01	2.7	0.06	10.2	
9. Cooperation	5.7	0.05	—	—	—	—
10. Industries	—	—	12.2	0.25	57.6	0.76
11. Social welfare	4.6	0.03	15.5	0.11	—	—
12. Taxes	—	—	—	—	—	—
13. Loans and deposits	293.0	2.85	50.2	10.07	99.6	1.33
14. Others	38.1	0.36	2.4	0.11	25.9	0.33

The per capita expenditure of the panchayat samitis is shown in Table XLIII.

The biggest item of expenditure is obviously primary education on which the three panchayat samitis spent Rs. 1.7, 2.1. and 2.5 per capita respectively.

Table XLIII

Panchayat samiti	*Stage*	*Population (000)*	*Total expenditure (Rs. 000)*	*Per capita expenditure (Rs.)*
'D'	pre. ext.	103	609.5	5.9
'J'	II	47	283.5	6.0
'S'	I	75	373.7	7.6

The most important feature of the income and expenditure patterns of the three panchayat samitis is the large difference among them both in respect of income and expenditure. This is mainly because they are situated in three different types of blocks each having its own quota of community development funds and governmental assistance. To some extent the inter-block differentials are a reflection of the dissimilar block undertaking more developmental activities (or in which the state government had, in the pre-panchayati raj period, been already engaged in numerous activities) and naturally becoming entitled to more funds. Thus under the existing financing pattern inter-panchayat samiti differences in both income and expenditure are likely to persist.

Another important point regarding the panchayat samiti finance that deserves to be highlighted is the steady rise in a panchayat samiti's overall income and expenditure and the large fluctuations in itemwise incomes and more especially, expenditure. This again is a direct outcome of the schematic pattern of the community development budget under which only specified amounts are made available for specific items. As these funds are spent in one particular year there is a corresponding reduction in the funds for the same purpose in the following years. The fluctuations in itemwise funds though inevitable detract considerably from the concentration and continuity of the panchayat samiti programmes and impose upon the block officials the annual burden of dropping old schemes and drawing new ones for enhanced funds. The expenditure pattern of the three panchayat samitis under study for the years 1961-62, 1962-63 and 1963-64 (estimates) clearly indicates the wide fluctuations in itemwise expenditure in all the

While some fluctuations in expenditure are likely in any of institutional budget special attention should be paid towards preventing extreme fluctuations in panchayat samiti expenditure in the uniform budget proposed to be adopted in the post-community development stage.

The main general conclusion that emerges from the empirical evidence presented above is that the financing pattern of the panchayat samitis needs immediate overhauling. The course of action suitable for urgent action is the streamlining of the panchayat samiti budget separating it from the community development and departmental budget before the blocks actually reach the post-stage II. The experience in the three panchayat samitis does not offer any bright prospects as far as the question of augmentation of resources through imposition or collection of taxes is concerned.

At Zila Parishad Level

The zila parishad is mainly an advisory body having little executive duties and as such the budget of the zila parishad is not of much operational significance. It receives nearly all its establishment charges as a grant from the government and has no sources of raising its own income except contributions from the panchayat samitis.

The main establishment charges relate to the payment of salaries and allowances to the staff and the honorarium and other facilities for the pramukh which are met entirely out of the government grant that has been increasing in quantum over the last four years as follows:

Table XLIV

Year	*Grant (in rupees)*
1959-1960	12,20,000
1960-1961	19,18,000
1961-1962	25,05,000
1962-1963	24,50,000

The zila parishad under study has tried to levy a contribution on the panchayat samitis on a voluntary basis from the cess revenue collected by them before the introduction of panchayati raj. Then the district board had levied a cess on land revenue at the rate of one anna per rupee which was collected by the patwari (revenue officer) and deposited in the tehsil office from where it was made available to the district board. After the introduction of panchayati raj on 2nd October, 1959 this source of income was transferred to the panchayat samiti and the rate was revised at 5 paise per rupee. The cess is now collected by the tehsildar through the patwari and deposited in panchayat samiti accounts. The panchayat samitis are required to contribute 5 per cent of the total income thus collected to the zila parishad. The following table shows the income accruing to the zila parishad under study from this source.

Table XLV

Year	*Estimate*	*Actual*
1959-60	Nil	Nil
1960-61	N.A.	11,273.74
1961-62	10,000	7,379.76
1962-63	10,000	3,594.37
1963-64	7,000	

The table shows that the income from this source is falling and for 1963-64 even the estimate has been lowered. It appears that many panchayat samitis fail to send their contributions and the zila parishad finds itself powerless to collect them. The zila parishad office continues to send reminders to the panchayat samitis but they seem to be ineffective. On being pressed the panchayat samitis explain that they cannot send the requisite contribution to the zila parishad since they themselves get the money late. Moreover, they are in great need of financial resources. So far the zila parishad has not contemplated any action against the defaulting panchayat samitis and the issue has not even been raised at the general meeting of the zila parishad. On the contrary one of the panchayat samitis has decided at its

general meeting on 13th March 1963 not to contribute any amount to the zila parishad out of its cess revenue. So far this is only a solitary example but some more panchayat samitis may follow suit. This is a serious matter and if not attended to in time would deprive the zila parishad of a major portion of its income. It must be discussed at a general meeting as soon as possible.

On the expenditure side the establishment charges constitute the main item and are rising as the personnel, etc. expand as shown in the table below :

Table XLVI

Year	*Establishment (pay & allowances)*	*Other allowances*
1959-60	4,687.31	1,339.03
1960-61	10,069.26	2,411.59
1961-62	12,852.23	1,272.39
1962-63	15,496.40	887.80

Besides this, the zila parishad in its 1962-63 budget tried for the first time to provide for some new schemes such as publication of a monthly and annual journal and provision of a scholarship at Sainik School, Chittor, but ultimately it had to drop all of them for lack of resources.

General Problems

Apart from the specific problems of revenue and resources the panchayati raj institutions commonly face certain problems concerning financial administration, especially accounting and auditing. The newly created panchayati raj institutions have surmounted a number of administrative difficulties but their financial administration continues to be confusing and on occasions even chaotic. At the panchayat level it is the sarpanch who in his personal capacity is often the sole custodian of the panchayat funds and consequently proper accounting is scarcely possible. The panchayats have no trained persons to handle financial transactions and the responsibility for the maintenance of accounts

devolves on the panchayat sarpanch or the secretary who are generally not competent to deal with the technicalities of accounting. At the panchayat samiti level the only trained hand is the accounts clerk who is in the grade of a lower division clerk. The total financial turnover of a panchayat samiti varies between Rs. 2 lakhs and Rs. 10 lakhs including the complex accounting involved in the grant and recovery of loans. The panchayat samiti is the disbursing centre of the salaries of the primary school teachers. The salary amounts to well over a lakh of rupees. In addition the panchayat samiti distributes a number of grants, loans and subsidies to panchayats and other individuals and institutions. The vikas adhikari who is a generalist officer belonging to the administrative services and the extension officers who are technical officers are in no position to understand accounting procedures. Essentially field workers, they can hardly afford to devote regular attention to the maintenance of proper accounts. As a result, the financial accounting at the panchayat samiti level suffers and many irregularities and illegalities go unnoticed and unchecked.

The situation is rendered worse by the highly irregular system of auditing of the accounts of the panchayats and panchayat samitis. At present the Examiner, Local Fund Audit, Government of Rajasthan, is responsible for auditing of panchayat and panchayat samiti accounts on a free basis. With the existing strength of the staff the Examiner, Local Fund Audit, is not able to undertake annual auditing of the 7396 panchayats, though the coverage with regard to the 232 panchayat samitis is better. The panchayat samiti audit reports prepared by this department are comprehensive documents probing deeply all the aspects of the panchayat samiti accounts, though the main emphasis is on (a) procedural irregularities, (b) excess or unauthorised payments and (c) embezzlements. But less attention is paid to 'higher audit' in terms of the necessity or efficiency of expenditure.

Though no radical measures to rescue panchayati raj immediately from the accounting morass can be prescribed without providing for substantially increased administrative establishment and expenses, the attention of state government can be drawn to the existing maladies so that gradual action may be taken to eradicate them. One proposal frequently canvassed by the vikas adhikaris deserves special mention. For easing the accounting burden of the vikas adhikari the appointment of a special accounts officer

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of the gazetted rank is often suggested. Though the appointment of such a functionary would obviously lead to improvement in the accounting practices and procedures, it would involve a costly burden on the state exchequer. While the proposal may be reserved for implementation at a future date a beginning can be made by associating the district accounts officers more closely with panchayati raj institutions and upgrading the post of the panchayat samiti accountant to the rank of upper division clerks. At the same time the panchayats must be statutorily required to get their accounts audited every year and disciplinary action may be initiated against the sarpanch who fails to get the panchayat accounts audited during his term of office.[62]

62 For detailed suggestions about improving panchayati raj finances see Appendix to this chapter.

X

The Political Umbrella

PANCHAYATI RAJ is designed to be an interlinked three-tier structure at the institutional level. It has also proved to be a part of the complex and intricate web of state and, to some extent, even of national politics. Local politics is different from the state and national politics but its presence at the panchayati raj levels cannot be denied or deliberately ignored. The panchayati raj institutions have not been able to remain isolated from the political currents around them. Actually in many cases panchayati raj leaders have gone out of their way to divert these to their own advantage. In the context of the panchayati raj set up the term "political" cannot as yet be used to denote divisions along ideological or party lines. It is politics of individual connections and preferences, though political labels and ideologies cannot be relegated completely into the background in a discussion of local politics today.

The term "politics" itself is considered a derogatory epithet at local levels and political parties have only a nominal existence at the panchayat or the panchayat samiti levels. At panchayati raj meetings and in their public utterances the rural people unequivocally condemn what they call "party politics". In practice however almost every panchayat and panchayat samiti is split into two or more factions each trying to oust the other from all centres of power. These factions revolve round one or two leading personalities, usually the main contestants for the pradhanship. The size and strength of factions also is subject to wide periodical fluctuations. Once a faction secures a majority in panchayat samiti with the support of most of the sarpanchas it entrenches

itself and by using devices like distribution of benefits and offices tries to maintain itself in power. The losing faction generally has no option but to resign itself to its fate and accept the domination of the ruling faction. These factions do not follow a fixed pattern of alliances with any party or political leader but maintain a kind of loose and indirect relationship with the state level leadership.

The relationship between state and panchayati raj leaders can only be understood in terms of the phenomenon of "influence-zones" which means that certain areas are generally regarded as falling under the "influence" of one state level political leader or the other. Usually as one moves in the panchayats and panchayat samitis one hears that one of the state level leaders (generally a minister) is the most influential person in the area and that the pradhan and his group are nothing but his or her "pocket-men"[63] In ordinary conversation the people and even officials rarely hesitate to identify the minister or any other leader whose "pocket-men" the local pradhan, etc. are. The use of the term "pocket-men" is likely to give a misleading impression that the "influence-zone" is a one-way traffic and that the minister alone influences the pradhan. In fact such "influence-zones" are organised on the principle of mutuality—the two obliging each other.

The phenomenon of the local "pocket-men" operating in the "influence-zones" of ministers and state level leaders should not be taken as reflecting a low level of political consciousness in the villages and the absence of capable local leadership. It is true that in a state like Rajasthan, where centuries of princely rule had kept the people in political backwaters, the people at the village and panchayat level had hardly any opportunity of acquiring leadership status. It is also true that with the extremely poor means of transportation and communications the local leaders seldom got a chance of using the "influence-zones" as two-way channels of benefit. They always remained subordinate to district and state level leadership. This state of affairs prevailed even after independence. Even today the pattern remains the same with a minister or a state level leader acting almost like a presiding deity over a wide zone consisting of many panchayat samitis and, in a few cases, over many zila parishads. There is however a difference. The introduction of panchayati raj has cer-

63. The term seems to be a loose translation of an often repeated Hindi phrase which in English means 'so and so is in my pocket.'

tainly given a fillip to the local leadership to question the influence exercised by the state leaders, particularly M.L.As and, in many cases, to overthrow the hegemony exercised by them. While in the pre-panchayati raj era an M.L.A. was regarded as a big political leader, many sarpanchas and pradhans have themselves become M.L.As and today the M.L.A. often is just a pale shadow of the pradhan. This explains how the principle of subordination has yielded place to the principle of mutuality as a basis of organisation for the "influence-zones" even with regard to ministers who are after all M.L.As enthroned into power.

The pradhan has emerged as a key political figure and panchayati raj has clearly given a halo to his office which is not so much associated with the office of the sarpanch. The pradhan has become a dominating figure on account of several reasons and the state as well as the panchayat level leaders recognise this. There are sarpanchas who rival the pradhan in eminence but in panchayati raj affairs, by and large, the pradhan stands far above the non-officials.

Politics and Panchayat Samiti

The general analysis can be illustrated with the help of the area-studies of the three panchayat samitis taken up for intensive survey.

1. In one of the panchayat samitis the pradhan is a leading agriculturist of the area. In addition to a large mechanised farm he owns considerable property in Jaipur city. The pradhan has never joined any political party but has definite leaning towards the Congress and operates in the "influence-zone" of a very powerful cabinet minister the link being mainly of caste considerations.

Before the introduction of panchayati raj the pradhan did not evince much interest in political activity, but did crusade for village uplift with a service motive and was instrumental in the formation of a local informal citizens committee to carry out the task. The pradhan was able to secure the support of some enlightened ex-jagirdars for this purpose, one of whom was also a sarpanch of a panchayat. With the introduction of panchayati raj the pradhan became a sarpanch of a panchayat and later became the up-pradhan in the panchayat samiti. With shrewd manipulations he succeeded in getting the support of the ex-jagir-

dars' group and threw the pradhan out by moving a motion of no-confidence against him. When the panchayat elections were held again in December 1960 he secured a sarpanchship and announced his candidature for pradhanship. The ousted ex-pradhan adopted a different strategy and made it clear that he would enter the panchayat samiti through the process of cooptation. The contest for cooptation thus became a political battle in which the ex-pradhan was defeated by a margin of one vote only. With his rival out of the panchayat samiti the pradhan's position was strengthened by the inclusion of seven other coopted members who were all his supporters. The pradhan continued to dominate the panchayat samiti and his rival was reduced to the position of a minor nuisance.

The harmonious relations between the pradhan who campaigned on behalf of the Congress and the sarpanch ex-jagirdar who contested for a Vidhan Sabha seat on a Swatantra ticket was disrupted in the wake of the third general elections. This divided the panchayat samiti into two main groups and the ex-pradhan was quick to rally his forces on the side of the ex-jagirdar sarpanch who won the contest riding the crest of the tide that swept the entire Jaipur district and routed the Congress. The Swatantra Party won 13 out of the 15 seats it had contested in the district defeating the Congress candidate almost at each place. The staggering victory had tangential effects on panchayati raj politics. In the wake of the Swatantra victories motions of no-confidence were launched against the pradhans in most of the panchayat samitis. It must be stressed that all these motions were lost revealing clearly that state politics has only tangential impact on local politics which often cuts across party lines. It has not as yet assumed a ministic role in any absolute sense. Though the ex-jagirdar sarpanch who now became M.L.A. had moved the motion of noconfidence with the help of the ex-pradhan and their combined strength enhanced the chances of its success, the pradhan's counter mobilisation of support was so effective that many followers of the rival group were drawn into his group. The motion was lost with nobody voting in its favour. The pradhan has since then strengthened his politioal hold and, though the sarpanch M.L A. continues to play a leading role in panchayati raj affairs, the pradhan appears to be completely at the helm of affairs. It may be added that the record of service of the pradhan which had been a contributory factor in raising the prestige and status of the panchayat

samiti enabled him to defeat the no-confidence move so triumphantly. Also he did not lack in the capacity for manipulating alliances.

2. In the second panchayat samiti the introduction of panchayati raj came at a time when a local leader had succeeded in lowering the colours of a state level Congress leader who had been very influential in the panchayat samiti and its neighbouring areas. The challenge to the state leader was the outcome of a local feeling that the leader had been neglecting the development of the area and had been instrumental in allotting the Congress ticket to a candidate who did not belong to the numerically dominating caste Under the leadership of the new pradhan (who at that time was a very young man) the local caste leaders united to defeat the Congress candidate. An independent candidate sponsored by them was elected. At the same time the political fortunes of the state leader touched a low point and this was hailed as a victory for the local rebels.

The introduction of panchayati raj however caused a minor setback to the triumphant local leader who lost the pradhanship to a more dominating person sponsored by the state leader and had to remain satisfied by being the up-pradhan. He soon succeeded in ousting the pradhan and during the panchayat elections in Decemher 1960, secured an overwhelming victory. Since then he has been functioning as a very active and ambitious pradhan looking forward to a seat in the Vidhan Sabha and ultimately a place in the state cabinet.

Politics in this panchayat samiti has assumed a peculiar character as the pradhan has shown marked sympathies for the Swatantra Party, though he does not identify himself completely with it. As a result the Congress-oriented sarpanchas in the panchayat samiti have been placed in a minority position and have been left out of all standing committees. During the third general elections the Congress candidate was once again routed with the active support of the pradhan for a Swatantra candidate, who is otherwise a very insignificant person. The Congress leaders tried to exert political pressure on the pradhan and other non-officials to support the Congress candidate. They refused to yield and the pradhan was reported to have sent a strong rejoinder to the Chief Minister's appeal to him to desist from anti-Congress canvassing. The pradhan made it clear that his anti-Congress

stand was the result of the neglect of panchayat samiti area by the Government and the foisting on the local people an outsider as a candidate. The pradhan added that he became pro-Swatantra because he was disgusted with the policies and leadership of the Congress.

3. In the third panchayat samiti the Congress had a firm base. The party in the pre-1960 elections had installed a pradhan who was closely related to a Deputy Minister of P
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Other Institutions

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links of the sarpanchas have become firmer and sharper after the third general elections. Perhaps the process would continue through the panchayat elections to the fourth general elections. Though politics at the panchayet level by and large does not follow party lines, it nevertheless exists. The mould in which the panchayat politics is usually cast relates to factions at the panchayat samiti level. The panchayat either belongs to the pradhan's group or his rival's. Sometimes groupism is reflected in the intra-panchayat factions with some panchas belonging to one group and some to another, though this is more an exception than a rule. This type of politics influences the flow of funds and benefits to the panchayats from the panchayat samiti—the favourite getting the lion's share if not monopolising the whole.

2. As a corollary to the above, it may be mentioned, that intrapanchayat politics sometimes affects even the election of the nyaya panchas introducing into it a political element. This of course is at a minimal level. The panchayats normally are not very happy with the creation of the nyaya panchayats as these have affected their status and prestige. They used to administer justice in the days of tehsil panchayats in the pre-decentralisation period. This also explains, at least partly, the desire of the panchas to keep the nyaya panchayats within their influence zone if not under complete domination.

3. The gram sabhas so far do not have political overtones. It may be because they are locally organised bodies with little or no formal power and influence. However some of them at times appear faction-ridden in the image of the pronounced factions in the panchayat samiti and the panchayats.

4. The zila parishad presents the spectacle of a body whose members, both pradhans and M.L.As, have distinct political affiliation and sometimes even formal party links. It should be said to the credit of zila parishad as a body and its pramukh that they have resisted the temptation of drawing local issues into the state level politics. Immediately after the third general elections and in the wake of Swatantra victories it appeared however that this tradition might be violated. The zila parishad has set a healthy precedent which should be emulated elsewhere.

Findings

The survey throws light on the following significant aspects:

(i) The pradhanship in all the three panchayat samitis has

stand was the result of the neglect of panchayat samiti area by the Government and the foisting on the local people an outsider as a candidate. The pradhan added that he became pro-Swatantra because he was disgusted with the policies and leadership of the Congress.

3. In the third panchayat samiti the Congress had a firm base. The party in the pre-1960 elections had installed a pradhan who was closely related to a Deputy Minister of Rajasthan. The up-pradhanship went to a young Congressman and he soon began political manoeuvring to dislodge the pradhan who in disgust resigned. The up-pradhan officiated as pradhan and continued to be in the good books of the Deputy Minister. During the panchayat elections in December 1960 he decided to enter the panchayat samiti through the device of co-optation and succeeded by a narrow margin of one vote. At the same time his six other supporters were also coopted. The contest for pradhanship was easy for him. His rival, a vetern Congress worker, faded out of the scene. The third general elections came and the pradhan changed his political loyalty in favour of the Swatantra Party whose 'star' was clearly in ascendance. The pradhan supported Swatantra Party during the elections but, after a brief period, cooled off and once more returned to the Congress fold. In spite of this an enquiry was launched against him in February 1963. The final verdict is not yet known but the knowledgable people in the area claim that it would be an eye-wash since the pradhan is once more in the "influence-zone" of a powerful person. The prophecy does not appear likely to come true ; it has been reported in a local newspaper, on the basis of reliable sources, that the pradhan has been suspended.

Other Institutions

Having studied the role of the political factor in the panchayat samitis under our study we now refer briefly to its role in the context of other panchayati raj institutions.

1. The political factor is much less obvious at the panchayat level than at the panchayat samiti level. The panchas neither bear a distinct party label nor do they generally have any pronounced bias for any political party. This is less true of the sarpanchas who generally have preference for and, quite often, links with one or the other political party. These links are more informal than formal. It has been observed that the political

links of the sarpanchas have become firmer and sharper after the third general elections. Perhaps the process would continue through the panchayat elections to the fourth general elections. Though politics at the panchayet level by and large does not follow party lines, it nevertheless exists. The mould in which the panchayat politics is usually cast relates to factions at the panchayat samiti level. The panchayat either belongs to the pradhan's group or his rival's. Sometimes groupism is reflected in the intra-panchayat factions with some panchas belonging to one group and some to another, though this is more an exception than a rule. This type of politics influences the flow of funds and benefits to the panchayats from the panchayat samiti—the favourite getting the lion's share if not monopolising the whole.

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Findings

The survey throws light on the following significant aspects:

(i) The pradhanship in all the three panchayat samitis has

changed hands. But in no case the outgoing pradhan has been ousted directly by the people or the electorate. He has been defeated by the manoeuvrings of the up-pradhan in two cases and of a leading opponent in the third case.

(ii) The pradhans who have emerged successful in the conflict for power are younger than those whom they have replaced.

(iii) The political alignments of the leading local leaders have been changing according to personal convenience and local expediency.

(iv) The political events at national and state levels like the general elections have only tangential impact on local politics. The local party and political alignments do shift but the shift is in favour of local leaders and is mainly dependent on the personalities and interest of the local leaders.

(v) The pradhans have emerged as key political figures and political parties and state level leaders try to woo them; the pradhans respond not on the basis of ideological affinities but on the calculation of individual advantages.

(vi) The pradhans can overshadow the M.L.A. and, in fact, sometimes even act as M.L.A. makers.

(vii) The institutions of panchayats, nyaya panchayats and the zila parishads (except the gram sabhas) are not immune from political overtones. But these are much less operative at the level of these institutions than at the panchayat samiti level. In fact political overtones are primarily visible at the panchayat samiti level and they subsequently reflect on other panchayati raj institutions.

(viii) The political bearings of panchayati raj have a close impact on the pattern of emerging administrative relationships and the problem of supervision.

It may be emphasized that politics of panchayati raj should be allowed to take its natural course; attempts to divert it artificially or direct it with coercion will be anti-democratic. For example, it should be left to the good sense of the political parties as to how would they like to operate in relation to panchayati raj institutions. At best efforts can be made to develop healthy conventions to bring about an equilibrium between panchayati raj as *power mechanism* and panchayati raj as *development mechanism*. One such convention could be that state level politicians should take a pledge not to cover the misdeeds of their non-official

counterparts at the rural local levels and also not harass the officials serving panchayati raj institutions just to satisfy the whims of their non-official colleagues. Such a code of behaviour on the part of state level politicians would help the process of adjustment between the officials and non-officials which would be in the interest of both grass roots democracy and planned development of the country.

XI

Web of Administrative Relationships

AS stated earlier the three-tier panchayati raj institutional structure forms part of an interlocked system in which the state government, government officials, politicians and political parties play an important role. The panchayati raj institutions are therefore enmeshed in a web of politico-administrative relationship around which the mechanism of supervision and control is also built. It must be reiterated to set the problem of supervision and control in a proper perspective that panchayati raj institutions have just an agency status. They are to execute public policy which in actual practice is decided at central and state levels. The local institutions have for all practical purposes only a limited role to play *viz.*, mobilising public support and local resources for successful implementation of national policies embodied in the plan documents in a general way and specified in detail in the community development schematic block budget, governmental instructions, circulars and directives. These may be issued from offices at the state and district headquarters or from field officers.

Our field study of the panchayati raj institutions has only confirmed the foregoing general analysis in a specific setting by revealing the keen interest that the state government takes in the panchayati raj institutions and the close control it exercises over them. It also highlights the extreme dependence of these institutions on governmental laws, rules and procedures on the one hand and funds and personnel on the other. This dependence should not be interpreted as unwarranted dominance; it should rather be viewed as a functional device to ensure that the decentralised power is not misused and plan targets and priorities do

not suffer. It is inherent in the role envisaged for the panchayati raj institutions in a system of democratic but centralised planned development. At times it of course leads to lack of flexibility affecting the efficiency of panchayati raj institutions.

The general pattern and procedures of panchayti raj have been defined in the two basic Acts—the Rajasthan Panchayat Act, 1953, and the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959, together with various rules made thereunder from time to time. The keen interest of the Rajasthan Government in panchayati raj institutions is perhaps best reflected in the numerous amendments made in the Acts and rules as a result of continuous thinking. Some of these amendments have been necessitated by operational problems while others have been effected to streamline the panchayati raj apparatus. Some amendments, such as those lessening the frequency of panchaya[illegible] -ing the daily and travelling allowances to [illegible] -bers and the one relating to circulation of model by laws deserve special mention.

The development department under the charge of a development commissioner is the main state government agency for regular supervision and control of the panchayati raj institutions. In practice however the joint development commissioner handles all matters relating to panchayati raj at the secretariat level. At the district level the district collector in the capacity of district development officer looks after the panchayati raj affairs. He is assisted by a deputy district development officer popularly known as the panchayat collector. For panchayats, a special functionary called the panchayat inspector works under the panchayat collector as the sole agency for supervision and control.

The development department exercises supervision and control mainly over panchayats and [illegible] trict under our study it did not ha[illegible] the zila parishad except calling for[illegible] proformas. In general the develc[illegible] an overall watch over panchayati raj institutions by issuing general directives and instructions through orders and circulars to the panchayats and panchayat samitis. In special cases it may issue specific orders to a particular institution but this is exceptional. The joint development commissioner sometimes makes personal enquiries in case of serious charges and complaints.

Generally this task is left to the district collector who also, the case of the district under our study, delegates the resp bility to someone else such as the additional collector.

A marked feature of working of panchayati raj institutio that charges of embezzlement and corruption are rampant at e level and a number of charge-sheets have been filed with development department against the pradhans or sarpanchas. the three panchayat samitis under study such complaints led enquiries in two, and in one the pradhan was exonerated. T enquiry in the second is in the process. Voices are frequent raised against the sarpanchas and in many cases the governme launches enquiries and takes appropriate action under the Rajas than Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act.

The development department uses mainly two supervisory techniques—setting the administrative procedure and calling for regular progress reports regarding the various aspects of panchayati raj activities. As far as the first is concerned the panchayats and panchayat samitis invariably try to follow the standards set or norms prescribed by the department but their response to the second is not always encouraging. Panchayati raj officials and non-officials often complain that most of their time is consumed in paper work in connection with the submission of weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports of all sorts to numerous agencies and departments. Senior officers in the department also admit that reporting procedures need rationalisation. It was clearly seen in all the three panchayat samitis under study that the vikas adhikaris had become almost full time desk workers and their field trips were few. A similar situation has been observed in the case of the extension officers none of whom could ever fulfil the normal requirement of 20 days' of tour in a month. Even when all the panchayat samiti officials were seen working fully in the panchayat samiti office the flow of reports could hardly be described as satisfactory. One of the three panchayat samitis, for example, had failed to submit the annual administrative report for two consecutive years. Except to issue reminders the development department could take no other step. Similarly two panchayat samitis were consistent defaulters in submitting official proceedings and minutes of the meetings of the panchayat samiti and the standing committees. Such defaults even in the case of important documents went unchecked, and the situation about other reports was worse.

At the panchayat level the development department finds it even more difficult to exercise proper control through the requisition of reports as panchayats do not have qualified persons for the task. Usually the vikas adhikari collects the required information from the panchayat by contacting the sarpanch or the gram sevak and passes it on to the development department.

The panchayat inspector is a much feared functionary at the panchayat level and the inspections carried out by him constitute an important source of control and supervision. However, most panchayat inspectors do not carry out the inspections thoroughly and just fill the proforma in a perfunctory manner. What is worse is that the action on inspection reports is not swift and generally months pass before these are scrutinised at all.

At th [illegible] ent maintains reg [illegible] tions as a sort of p [illegible] yat samiti on the one hand and the department on the other with the latter contacting the zila parishad for information regarding a panchayat or panchayat samiti. The department conducts many state and district competitions with regard to the best gram sevaks, small savings drives in villages, *medhbundi* campaigns etc. and collects the relevant information mainly through the zila parishad. The zila parishad, having no supervisory or inspection machinery of its own, just collects information from the panchayat samitis and forwards it to the department. They then award prizes, etc. on the basis of information that often turns out to be sketchy and, at times, even inaccurate. In a gram sevak competition in 1962 one of the gram sevaks in a panchayat samiti in the district under our study was awarded a prize. Later investigations showed that all the statistics supplied about him were false or exaggerated. The issue was raised in the zila parishad as well as in the vidhan sabha but no action could finally be taken.

It may be added that within its limitations (of transport, finances, and of personnel) the zila parishad did try its best to be vigilant in these matters. It tried to carry out on the spot verification of the statistics supplied by the panchayats and panchayat samitis by organising inspection teams consisting of the concerned district level officers, members of the zila parishad and the secretary of zila parishad (and later deputy district development officer) who was an enthusiastic exponent of such schemes.

Besides the development department concerned mainly with administrative control, other technical departments, such as agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation and education, maintain a direct link with the panchayati raj institutions through the extension officers who act under 'double control'. They are under 'administrative control' of the vikas adhikari and technical control of the respective technical departments to which they belong. The world of dual control resembles a twilight zone and it is not always easy to delineate where the boundaries of the two types of control begin and end, though there is no inherent conflict between them. The system presupposes close understanding between the block development officer and the district level officers as also cordial relations between the block development officer and the extension officers. If conflict at either end arises the duality of control can paralyse both the mechanism of supervision and the panchayat samiti administration. In the three panchayat samitis under study no such case was observed and the system of dual control was found operating more or less smoothly.

A number of factors appear to have contributed to the smooth working of the system of dual control. First, the administrative control has come to acquire pre-eminence owing to the assertiveness of the block development officers, the lack of interest on the part of the technical departments and district level afficers and the sheer proximity of the agency of administrative control and comparative remoteness of technical control. Secondly, the role of the human factor cannot be minimised—the mutual efforts of the block development officers and the extension officers to function as a team account for the smooth working of the system in a great measure.

Let us examine a little closely how the system worked in practice. The extension officers were found working only nominally under the technical control of the departments which just amounted to a series of guidance circulars and office instructions. The vikas adhikari decided the general details of panchayat samitis' work at the monthly staff meetings and in the course of daily contacts. The technical departments would not take any initiative in the matter and would leave the extension officers to work according to the directions of the vikas adhikari. The vikas adhikari generally belongs to the state administrative service and is a senior gazetted officer in complete control of the block jeep. He is also the chief executive officer of the panchayat samiti and,

therefore, has constant contacts with the pradhan and other non-offici . The extension officers naturally res There is nothing wrong in this. What to learn however is that asserting themselves nt technical advice does not amount to ck development officer; it only means playing their legitimate role of technical extension officers in the block work as a "team". A significant but none too encouraging fact that has come to our notice is that the extension officers are not very clear about their role nor do they attach much import sely linked with the issue of t Coupled with the mythical the departments this affects the field performance of the extension officers with repercussions on developmental activities, all the more because extension officers have become more like desk workers than extension workers.

Another factor limiting the competence of the extension officers is that they have to work with the help of the sarpanchas who have come to play the boss over the extension officers together with the pradhan who is their super political boss. The political bosses have acted more as critics than as non-official colleagues of the extension officers, thus demoralising them. As a result, the extension officers are more keen on pleasing the political bosses than in playing their extension role. This improves their relationship with the non-official chiefs. They can thus afford even to ignore the administrative control of the B.D.O.

In this pattern of triarchical control the political control becomes the most important and perhaps the most penetrating of all the three and the worst casualty is the efficiency of the extension officers. They have to face bitter criticism for their poor performance at panchayat samiti meetings, though the fault does not lie exclusively with them. A general complaint is that the ext ps and make night halts laim travelling and other . Such complaints assumed serious proportions in one of the panchayat samitis under study and by a unanimous resolution it made it compulsory for extension officers to submit a certificate from the sarpanch of the panchayat which they visit in connection with official work. The resolution placed the extension officers completely under control

of the sarpanch. It did prevent false tour statistics as long as it was operative. The extension officers found the condition unpalatable but could do little as the pradhan also had supported the resolution. Later the vikas adhikari convinced the other members of the panchayat samiti that such a restriction was unnecessary. At a panchayat samiti meeting where the pradhan was absent he got a resolution passed withdrawing the restriction. In another panchayat samiti it is widely rumoured that the extension officers use the official jeep for personal purposes and obtain false certificates from friendly sarpanchas saying that they have visited their panchayats.

The extension officers are mostly very young persons with a junior status and they find themselves in the rather peculiar position of having to serve too many masters. Posted away from their home in small towns that provide little comforts and amenities and with a meagre pay and heavy work load they face an uphill task against overwhelming odds. Faced with these difficulties the extension officers often follow the line of least resistance and seldom care to make use of their technical competence which they do not always have in great measure. Moreover the threat of transfer always hangs over them and the knowledge that they have no avenues of promotion leaves them totally helpless. Most of them develop a mechanical habit of obeying whatever orders are received Very few dare to launch programmes of real "extension" value.

The vikas adhikari on the other hand is able to act on his statutory obligations if he wants to do so and has the capacity for it. The relationship between the pradhan and the vikas adhikari almost always depends on the personal equation between them. These two, the key official and the leading non-official, stand out so clearly that everyone in the panchayat samiti area is busy calculating or speculating on who counts more, if not actually manipulating to make one superior to the other. There have been many cases where the pradhan and the vikas adhikari have been able te work shoulder to shoulder. But even in such panchayat samitis the question on everybody's lip has been how soon will the break come? In the three panchayat samitis which were under our study, for two years the research officers could view fairly closely the changing panorma of pradhans and vikas adhikaris and the vicissitudes in their relationships.

The pradhan of one of the panchayat samiti under study had built up the reputation of being a bully by forcing two brilliant vikas adhikaris to leave their post. But he found a match in the third vikas adhikari who being a very senior officer in the agriculture department knew all the tricks of the trade and managed to foil the tactics of the pradhan. During the tenure of this particular vikas adhikari the panchayat samitis undertook a constructive work and pradhan had to cooperate. What distinguished the vikas adhikari was his tactfulness; he would show due deference to the non-official chief, the pradhan, but would know where to put his foot down. Behind his soft and meek exterior there appeared to be the strength of will and character. This was further fortified by his identification with community development programme and panchayati raj institutions and by his insight and experience in work. It is not surprising, therefore, that he could bring about a balanced partnership between the non-official leadership and official guidance. Had the vikas adhikari been allowed to stay longer in the panchayat samiti, he would have steadied the equilibrium of relationship all the more. But he was transferred and that also, as the rumour goes, for political reasons. The scene changed as soon as a new vikas adhikari joined. The tussle was renewed once again and the pardhan clearly appeared to be gaining the upper hand. The new vikas adhikari could not take advantage of the traditions set up by his predecessor because of his indifferent attitude towards his job and the responsibilities and obligations associated with it.

In another panchayat samiti the pradhan owed his political existence to the first vikas adhikari from whom he received a lot of help and encouragement and who had found the previous incumbent of pradhanship to be a dishonest and corrupt person. Assisted by the vikas adhikari the pradhan began his political career by resigning from his tehsil post and soon toppled his opponent in the political fray. Once in power the pradhan acquired a good grip over the panchayat samiti and completely overshadowed the next vikas adhikari. There followed a period of nearly two years during which the pradhan and the vikas adhikari maintained cordial relations, though there were occasional differences. The harmony was abruptly broken in a highly dramatic manner when the vikas adaikari gave some adverse evidence in a criminal case in which the pradhan was charged with beating

up a high government official. The immediate result of his evidence in support of the government official brought about a complete break between him and the pradhan. The pradhan thereafter adopted pressure tactics to harass the vikas adhikari who immediately proceeded on a month's leave and tried to secure a transfer. The pradhan tried to move the higher officials not to transfer the vikas adhikari and got a unanimous resolution approved by the panchayat samiti in this regard. At the same time the pradhan looked deep into the old files, brought out a number of charges against the vikas adhikari and went to the extent of supporting some of the class IV servants of the panchayat samiti to file an appeal against the decisions of the vikas adhikari. The battle of wits that thus ensued paralysed the panchayat samiti administration and almost every person associated with panchayati raj institutions in the area became absorbed in forecasting the outcome while sitting standstill on his own job chart.

In the third panchayat samiti the relations between the pradhan and the vikas adhikari started on a happy note: the pradhan lived in a village far away from the panchayat samiti headquarters and let the vikas adhikari alone. This resulted in an extremely smooth pattern of relationship between the two and the credit for this again goes to the tactfulness and calibre of the vikas adhikari. The panchayat samiti, guided by an able and euthusiastic vikas adhikari, obtained top ranking in Rajasthan. With complete help and cooperation from the pradhan the vikas adhikari could devote the entire time and staff for constructive purposes, and the panchayat samiti progressed rapidly. The vikas adhikari had completely identified himself with the community development programme and panchayati raj institution. With his insight and interest he inspired confidence in the villagers. His non-official colleagues respected him and his moral influence automatically served as a check on their partisan attitudes and discriminatory action. With great organising skill he could mobilise the cooperation of non-officials and villagers for development purposes. The organisation of an orderly panch-sarpanch sammelan on a large scale is a tribute to his qualities of leadership. After the vikas adhikari was transferred and till a new vikas adhikari could join an extension officer worked as vikas adhikari. The pradhan found him to be more pliable and began to assert his weight in the panchayat samiti affairs. This had immediate repercussions on the

constructive works under way in the panchayat samiti and matters did not improve much even when a new vikas adhikari joined. There ensued a period which is widely referred to and feared as the "unholy triple alliance" of the pradhan, the vikas adhikari and the extension officer. The period marked a total suppression of the personality of the vikas adhikari who was reported to have been pleased at heart when a motion of no confidence was brought against the pradhan.

The illustrative sketch of the pattern of relationship between the pradhans and the vikas adhikaris must not be interpreted as a mere clash of personalities. It has wide administrative repurcussions. Both are holders of key offices and any strain between them puts the entire panchayat samiti machinery out of gear. These strains do not arise mainly out of the human differentials but are caused by the political friction between a chief of the government machinery at the block level who is not always competent and interested in his job and a non-official political chief who is not always inspired by "public interest" nor is he always scrupulous. The conflict is, in fact, for power as very often the two functionaries behave as rivals. The tussle between the vikas adhikari and the pradhan is largely for command over the panchayat samiti resources—jeep, employees and other property in that order of importance. The jeep is always a cause of discord as the pradhan likes to keep it at his disposal while the vikas adhikari feels it should be deployed according to his directions. This frequently causes controversies and quarrels, though in all the three panchayat samitis it was usually the pradhan who got an upper hand. The control over panchayat samiti personnel is a key item which also gives rise to constant strain between the vikas adhikari and the pradhan. Since the panchayat samitis have been made responsible for primary education the appointment of teachers is a big privilege and the vikas adhikari and the pradhan have to fight their way out to monopolise it. The pradhan wants to utilise the appointment powers to distribute patronage and often to seek revenge and is generally able to overrule the protests, if any, from the vikas adhikari. Another point of conflict is the appointment of class IV servants to serve in the panchayat samiti office. In one of the panchayat samitis under study the entire ministerial staff is manned by the pradhan's handpicked persons whose presence is a big headache for the vikas adhikari. Finally, the utilisation of the property of

panchayat samiti such as hurricane lanterns, carpets, furniture etc. is another controversial item and a vikas adhikari who denies their free use cannot hope to maintain smooth relations with the non-officials. In all the three panchayat samitis under study these goods were freely made available for private use on such occasions as marriage or feasts. No vikas adhikari dared to protest against the misuse of public property.

The relationship between the vikas adhikari and the pradhan in particular and between the officials and non-officials in genera thus depends mainly on two factors: personal and political. Sinc the political factors are not determined by any ideological consi derations the two factors are always so mixed up that it is very difficult to separate them. The non-officials in general tend t respect the administrative neutrality of the officials but in actua practice do not pay much respect to it and take it to mean tha the officials will not protest against any abuse of power if all th formalities are complied with. This is rather easy to do as th pradhan or a sarpanch usually has the backing of a large majority and can get almost any resolution passed by the panchayat samit or the panchayat as the case may be.

A reference may be made to a case in one of the panchaya samitis where the pradhan wanted to retaliate against the vika adhikari who had ordered that no petrol should be issued for th block without his authorising it. The pradhan picked up tw very innocous looking items, such as, the formation of navyuva parishad and the conduct of the sub-divisional inspector c schools. The story, briefly, is as stated below.

> The navyuvak parishad is a block level associate organisa tion of navyuvak mandals which the district developmer officer at that time wanted to promote. He issued instruction to vikas adhikaris to constitute the same. The pradha telephoned the vikas adhikari not to constitute the navyuvu parishad or hold any election to this body without his pe mission. The vikas adhikari did not heed these verba instructions. As if smarting under the rebuff the pradha called a special meeting of the panchayat samiti where one c his supporters moved a resolution (in absentia, the meetin had been called so hurriedly that even the mover could no attend) that the navyuvak parishads which had been const tuted should be declared void. The vikas adhikari tried t

defend his action by pointing out that he was acting under the instructions of the district development officer. He added that no other panchayat samiti had held elections for the constitution of navyuvak parishad and he felt proud that his panchayat samiti had scored over others. He also pointed out that the election to navyuvak parishad was not a controversial issue and nobody could raise any objection to the manner in which it was held. But the pradhan stood firm and pressed the resolution for a vote. Only two sarpanchas could muster enough courage to oppose it. It may be observed that it was a case of opposition. The pradhan's actions were in no way inspired by any motive to improve the working of navyuvak mandals. Both in the past and in future he showed no interest in the organisation of such associate institutions. His opposition to the elections held for the formation of navyuvak mandals was clearly directed against the vikas adhikari in person. He made it abundantly clear by saying that he was satisfied that the elections were fair by all means but the vikas adhikari should have consulted him before holding them.

The second issue which the pradhan seized upon to humble the vikas adhikari related to the division of work between the two S.D.Is functioning at the panchayat samiti level. In this particular panchayat samiti there were two education extension officers (also called S.D.Is), one belonging to the education department and the other to the social welfare department. A fortnight before the meeting the pradhan had exchanged hot words with one of them and had threatened dire consequences which materialised in the shape of a resolution moved by one of his leading supporters to the effect that there should be a division of work on a territorial basis between the two officers.

Elaborating the need of the resolution the pradhan pointed out that the two officers had not been working satisfactorily and were not carrying out the requisite numbers of inspections, etc. He proposed that instead of both the officers being at the panchayat samiti headquarters and having jurisdiction over all the 21 panchayats, the panchayats should be divided into two groups of 10 and 11. One S.D.I. should stay at the panchayat samiti headquarters and the other have his office

at some other suitable place within his jurisdiction. Outlining the scheme the pradhan also identified the S.D.I. whom he wanted to stay at the panchayat samiti headquarters and the other whom he wanted to shift to some other place. The vikas adhikari explained that the panchayat samiti was not really competent to adopt such a resolution because the terms and conditions of service of the government officials deputed to the panchayat samiti were laid down by the state. government and the panchayat samiti had no powers to alter them arbitrarily. He further pointed out that in the deputation order to these officers there was no provision under which the panchayat samiti could transfer one of the officers from the panchayat samiti headquarters. He added that the two officers belonged to different departments and were looking after different aspects of educational matters and therefore they could not be entrusted with the same type of work on a territorial basis. All these observations proved ineffective and the issue was put to vote and the resolution adopted with only two sarpanchas voting against it. The vikas adhikari could do nothing but refer the matter to the government, stay the execution of the resolution and await orders which have not yet arrived.

Basically the problem of relationship between the officials and the non-officials is a problem of personal adjustment which largely is a matter of *attitude building*. Training programmes, both for the officials and the non-officials, with pronounced emphasis on orientation of attitudes can thus go a long way in easing the process of adjustment.

XII

The Administrative Challenge

WE can now turn to a study of the more important aspects of the administrative challenge that faces panchayati raj. It may be stressed at the outset that the administrative challenge cannot be studied in isolation from the emerging pattern of politico-administrative relationships to which we have devoted the preceding two chapters. In fact, the pattern of politico-administrative relationships would at times form the background for the study of the problem under review, at others would explain the factors responsible for the administrative bottlenecks and at still others would even cover some important aspects of the *administrative challenge.* There might thus be an element of overlapping in the treatment of the issue here of the pattern of politico-administrative relationships dealt with earlier. Perhaps this could not be helped.

It may be worthwhile to refer to the psychological phenomenon of resistance to change that is almost ingrained in the average villager and which makes the administrative challenge to panchayati raj baffling in its dimensions and difficult in its solution. The major problem which the non-officials as well as the officials have to face is that quite a few[64] of the programmes they are to implement are not readily accepted by the rural people This creates a two-fold problem for them. First, they have to create a demand in the people for programmes which often are considered not so worthwhile by the rural people themselves as by the planners.

64 [illegible] which are not [illegible]

This is no easy job and, coupled with administrative inefficiency, becomes all the most difficult to accomplish.

Secondly, even in the teeth of resistance to accepting the programme (more in some cases and less in others) they have to ensure that the programmes are implemented properly and benefits made to flow to the rural folk. Here a political dimension is added to the administrative challenge because the non-officials almost uniformly find it very difficult to resist the temptation to be partial in the distribution of benefits. This in turn obstructs the process of acceptance of the programme and adds to the gravity of the problem that crops up for the local administrator. The latter quite often connives at what the non-officials do and at times also builds up a sort of unholy alliance with the non-officials on a basis of reciprocity. The problem therefore is how to drive a wedge in the vicious circle. This is the essence of the administrative challenge facing panchayati raj.

The administrative services also face a serious problem today. They are responsible for the successful execution of the development programmes at the local level. Had this alone been their responsibility and under their exclusive jurisdiction the work would have been simple. But they have to work under the non-official political head, the pradhan, and in collaboration with a number of village level politicians, particularly the sarpanchas, who are at times neither articulate nor educated and sometimes not even scrupulous. The administrator has not merely to implement but also to educate. He has to impart a development orientation not merely to the rural folk but also to the political chiefs at the block level who often believe honestly they have nothing to learn or consider it below their dignity to learn from subordinates. The administrative services also suffer from psychologicel inhibitions. Quite often they have a superiority complex in relation to the non-officials and are unhappy playing second fiddle to illlterate non-officials. The non-officials in turn want to boss over them with a vengeance. These psychological factors are at the root of the *administrative challenge.*

The Organizational Set-up

The pradhan is the political chief at the panchayat samiti level responsible for proper implementation of all the programmes.

Ho is assisted by an up-pradhan who performs such duties as may be assigned to him by the pradhan. When the pradhan is absent or the office of the pradhan falls vacant he discharges the pradhan's responsibilities. Besides the two, there are chairmen of various standing committees which, as seen earlier, are in fact the real agencies through which the panchayat samitis function. These are so constituted as to cover the entire range of important functions of the panchayat samitis. When the panchayat samiti is not in session these committees act on its behalf subject, of course, to the approval of the parent body which for all practical purposes has become a formality. The pradhan and the up-pradhan can also become chairman of the committees.

Then there are a number of sarpanchas who are heads of the panchayats and *ex-officio* members of the panchayat samiti. There are ward panchas at the panchayat level and pramukhs at the zila parishad level, besides the member pradhans.

The chart in the following page illustrates the typical organisation and staffing pattern.

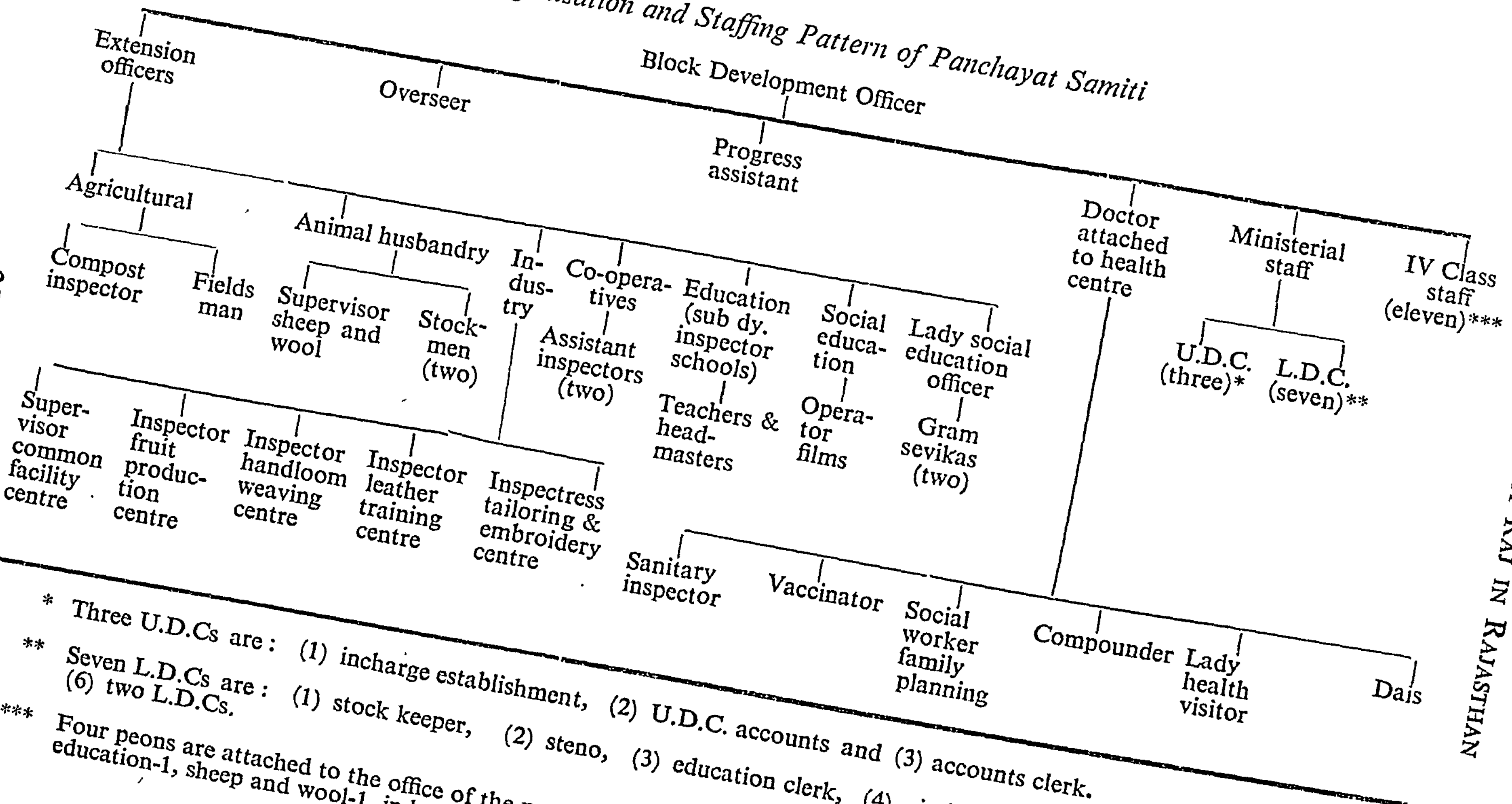
As shown in it, the staff working at the level of the panchayat samiti could be classified into two categories :

(i) There are officers on deputation to the panchayat samiti like the vikas adhikari, extension officers, account clerks, etc. As the panchayati raj institutions have been made responsible for administering the community development programme the entire block official team with the vikas adhikari at the top has been placed at the disposal of the panchayat samiti. However, the state government retains the overall control through these officers on deputation.

(ii) There is also the staff of the panchayat samitis and zila parishads consisting of primary school teachers, village level workers, field men, etc. Their services have been transferred to panchayati raj institutions completely by the creation of the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishad Services.

The vikas adhikari is the chief administrative officer. Though the various extension officers are under the technical control of their respective departments they are placed for administive purposes under the direct control of the vikas adhikari who exercises on-the-spot control. Non-official control over

Organisation and Staffing Pattern of Panchayat Samiti



* Three U.D.Cs are : (1) incharge establishment, (2) U.D.C. accounts and (3) accounts clerk.

** Seven L.D.Cs are : (1) stock keeper, (2) steno, (3) education clerk, (4) industry clerk, (5) agriculture clerk and (6) two L.D.Cs.

*** Four peons are attached to the office of the panchayat samiti and the remaining distributed as follows : co-operative-1, education-1, sheep and wool-1, industry-2, veterinary-1, and vaccination-1.

the vikas adhikari and the extension officers has been vested in the pradhan The extension officers thus have three masters to serve—the pradhan and his friends who are none but the important sarpanchas and members of the standing committees etc, the vikas adhikari and the heads of the respective departments to which they belong The pattern of three dimensional control is really confusing Very often the subordinate officers do not know where actually they stand and whose instructions are they supposed to carry out This leads to clash of loyalties between the officers and members of the staff

Recruitment

The staff on deputation is recruited through the Rajasthan Public Service Commission or directly by the various government departments concerned There are detailed rules and regulations framed by the appointmenting departments of the state to regulate appointment and service conditions

The vikas adhikaris are usually appointed from the cadres of the Rajasthan Administrative Service But even non Rajasthan Administrative Service officers like the members of the Rajasthan Tahsildars Service—persons who have previously been working as office superintendent or secretaries to the district boards—have sometimes been appointed as vikas adhikaris When the choice is confined to the officers of some duly constituted service it is merely a question of placement But where outsiders are also to be considered it becomes a problem of appointment Whether it is a case of placement or appointment it is the responsibility of the state government so far as officers on deputation are concerned

The non officials strongly hold that the B D O should not be a man from the Rajasthan Administrative Service The reasons they advance are

(i) The R A S Block Development Officers are not happy with this assignment holding it to be a compulsory banishment (*vanvas*) for two years as it is obligatory for them to serve in a block for this period They behave like the proverbial birds of passage and take no interest in their work

(ii) They are not reconciled to serving under illiterate political chiefs and want to boss over them or rule in spite of them by isolating them in the block level administrative set up They thus create problems of adjustment with the non officials.

(iii) The placement of R.A.S. men as B.D.Os limits the prospects of promotion of extension officers who deliver the goods much better because of their field experience of developmental activities.

The government officials hold a contrary view, the main arguments in their armoury being :

(i) The comparative experience of Rajasthan with other states (where men from the State Administrative Service have not been employed as B.D.Os) shows that it is useful to continue with the practice. In fact some states want to emulate it.

(ii) The R.A.S. Block Development Officers inject an element of sobriety in the administration of panchayati raj institutions and inspire respect in the non-officials for the enforcement of rules and regulations.

(iii) The presence of an R.A.S. officer with a certain status is also necessary for ensuring (a) that the development programme is properly and enthusiastically implemented and national priorities given due importance; (b) that benefits of development flow to the rural folk evenly; and (c) that funds are not misused.

(iv) The B.D.O. belonging to the R.A.S. cadre is better equipped for the administrative control of the panchayat samiti staff, particularly extension officers, than a promoted extension officer.

(v) Lastly, he also exercises a moral check on the misuse of authority by the non-officials for partisan purposes.

The arguments of both sides have a grain of truth. It cannot be denied that the R.A.S. Block Development Officers find it difficult to adjust themselves with the non-officials, partly at any rate, because of their psychological inhibitions. Efforts should be made to reorient their psychology through training, government circulars, longer stay as B.D.O., opening of promotion avenues for creditable performance and disciplinary action where necessary. The project team however strongly feels that the placement of R.A.S. officers as B.D.O. is sound in principle and should be continued in the larger interests of the success of both planned development and panchayati raj.

The employees of the panchayat samitis are to be selected by the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Service

Selection Commission which acts through its district establishment committees These committees consist of the pramukh of the zila parishad, the collector of the district and a member of the Commission

The district establishment committee makes recommendations on the basis of which actual appointments are to be made by the panchayat samitis The panchayat samitis may also make appointments to fill temporary vacancies by directly inviting applications, calling candidates through the employment exchange or appointing persons who may be recommended by the zila parishad provisionally Such appointments are made only when the persons recruited by the district establishment committees are not available or when in spite of repeated requests from the panchayat samitis the committee fails to fill the vacancies Such eventualities have been quite ragular particularly with regard to the appointment of primary school teachers Under such circumstances the vikas adhikari selects the candidates and appoints them subject to the approval of the standing committee on administration These appointments at times provide scope for patronage Its chances can be minimised if the panchayat samitis make appointments from the list of candidates approved by the Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishad Services Commission

Training[65]

We have not conducted any formal survey of the training programme But our research officers have made observations on attitude towards the training programme and its effectiveness These are summarised below

(i) The B D Os take the training programme rather casually But they do not want to evade it At any rate they agree that they gain from exchange of views with their counterparts from their own and other states

(ii) It is difficult to say whether there is any tangible impact of the training on the B D Os A B D O who was very ordinary (even below average) in our estimate in the pre-training era showed no improvements when he returned

65 It is neces
remarks We could
in fact requires an inc
and exchange of ideas with functionaries associated with panchayati raj These positive limitations have to be kept in view

after training. Another B.D.O. who was good did not become better after training. It is recognised however that it is difficult to assess the improvements after the training.

(iii) The village level worker is not casual in his attitude towards training. Yet he has to learn so much in so short a period of time that he does not become an effective multi-purpose functionary which he is intended to be. The general impression about him is that he is not competent enough to deliver the goods.

(iv) The non-officials are indifferent to the training programme. In fact they want to escape it as they are not prepared to leave their place of work. It is not surprising therefore that the training does not have enough impact on them.

The training programme has to be seriously reviewed in the light of these observations because it is the backbone of successful operation of the panchayati raj institutions.

Promotions

The functionaries who belong to duly constituted service cadres might reasonably look forward to promotion within their cadre. Inter-cadre promotion also is made but it is somewhat difficult. In the case of the members of the Rajasthan Administrative Service the scope of such promotions is very limited. The members in this category of service seem to believe that recommendations from and links with ministerial circles play a very significant role in the matters of placement and promotion. Within their own departmental setting the extension officers, inspectors, doctors, compounders and other members of professional and technical services are eligible for promotion as and when it becomes due.

The chances of promotion for primary school teachers, village level workers and others employed by the panchayat samiti are very limited. Because of the absence of promotional avenues these services are very much frustrated. Village level workers who entered service in the early years of inception of the community development movement with all the expectations and assurances of promotion have now come to realise that they have been intrigued into a blind alley.

In order that any work force may give its best it is imperative

that it should be fairly content with service conditions and avenues of promotion. It should not keep cursing itself and its employers. It is also necessary that steps are taken to redress the grievances of the employees in this regard.

Service Conditions

Service conditions of the various categories of staff working under the panchayat samitis are prescribed in the concerned acts and rules made by the state government. For the officers on deputation their original conditions of service continue to operate. The panchayati raj institutions have nothing to do in this regard. So far as the lower grade staff is concerned uniform rules prescribing the various conditions are framed by the state government under the Rajasthan Pancnayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act, 1959. The panchayati raj institutions have no say in the making of these rules, but they are responsible for their enforcement.

Service in the rural areas is not very attractive for most people. It is the last alternative and is taken as a punishment. The objections to posting in a rural area arise from very many factors, such as the difficulties of village life, hard travel conditions and fear of interference by the so-called uncouth local politicians who have come to wield power. Lack of proper housing facilities for the families of the officers, absence of electricity and tap water, want of educational facilities for children, and the absence of proper medical facilities are almost a nightmare for the young officials who enter their career with all the glamour of administrative service. This partly explains why the B.D.Os do not put their heart in work which in turn affects their performance. What deepens the frustration in the B.D.Os is the prospect of the pradhan writing their confidential report and spoiling it if they refuse to toe his line. It is true that the collector can rebut it. But the pradhan with his political links at the state level can spoil the report of the B.D.O. or, at any rate, get him transferred. The B.D.O. thus works under the shadow of fear of an imminent bad entry in his record or a transfer. This may not happen always but its psychological impact on the B.D.Os works adversely.

Improper Utilisation of Staff

We now focus our attention to the more important adminis-

trative problems facing panchayati raj today. The statement below gives the staff strength of a panchayat samiti :

Staff Strength of Panchayat Samiti

Block Development Officer	1
Agriculture extension officer	1
Staff under agriculture extension officer	3
Animal husbandry extension officer	1
Staff under animal husbandry extension officer	6
Cooperative extension officer	1
Staff under cooperative extension officer	3
Sub dy. inspector of schools	1
Staff under sub dy. director of schools	2
Teacher	124
Social education organiser	2
Gram kaki	15
Gram sevika	2
Industries extension officer	1
Staff under industries extension officer	17
Overseer	1
Progress assistant	1
Sanitary inspector	1
Staff under sanitary inspector	2
Doctor	1
Compounder	1
Midwife	4
Peon	1
Gram sevak	10
U.D.C.	2
L.D.C.	4
Driver	1
Cinema operator	1
Class IV servant	4
Total	214

It would appear from the chart that at the panchayat samiti headquarters there are over 60 persons in all on the pay roll. It is worth recalling that while in the first stage when the budget of

the panchayat samitis ran into Rs 20 lakhs over a period of three years, the strength of the staff was the same as now when the budget has been reduced to Rs 5 lakhs Then as now one wondered whether this huge army of administrative and professional staff was fully employed or, better still, properly employed

The situation is not satisfactory There has been resentment amongst very many district level officers about the manner in which the staff on deputation, more particularly the extension officers are used by the panchayat samitis They have been reduced to desk workers from the position of extension officers In certain cases they have even been required to take up clerical jobs of routine nature In one of the panchayat samitis under study the sub deputy inspector of schools was required to look after the office work During one full year, 1961-62, the two sub-deputy inspectors of schools posted in one of the panchayat samitis could hardly inspect six primary schools as they were busy, most of the time doing routine office work Similarly two stock assistants of the sheep and wool department were posted in the accounts section as clerks for several months in a panchayat samiti under study

Cases have also not been lacking where primary school teachers have been withdrawn from schools and asked to work in the office as section assistants The same is true of sanitary inspectors also The real difficulty seems to be that the government has allotted officials to the various panchayat samitis on a uniform basis without looking into their needs A more realistic allotment of the personnel will go a long way in safeguarding against the misuse of the officials which at least partly is due to the amount of the office work that has increased in the wake of panchayati raj The filling of proformas submitting progress reports and attending to circulars involve such a heavy work load for the B D O's office that he has no alternative but to divert his staff for the satisfaction variously of the collector s office the zila parishad and the development department

Poor Extension Work

The performance of extension officers by and large has been rather poor They have neglected the extension aspect of their work They have failed to communicate themselves to the villagers They have also been indifferent towards tours particularly in the interior In fact, they try to see that the village

level worker deputises for them. The V.L.W. is not competent to undertakes tours. This means that the V.L.W. neglects his own responsibilities which are already too many. For, after all, he is the village's multi-purpose man.

More regrettable, the extension officers have become allies to group politics. They play into the hands of the dominating group and connive at their partisan, discriminatory and at times even unscrupulous activities. In terms of triarchical control—the technical, the administrative and the political—they care for the three in reverse order and that also in diminishing proportions. Altogether, development activities have not received the fillip at their hands as had been expected.

But they are not to be blamed alone. The B.D.Os engage them in too much office work. They also are helpless as the paper work is so heavy that they have no alternative but to fall back upon the extension officers. Again, if the extension officers do not toe the line of the non-official leaders they anticipate trouble. Thus an administrative impasse is reached which the officers themselves are in no position to solve.

VLW at Bay

If the extension officers have to suffer under the yoke of threefold loyalties, the V.L.Ws have a worse lot. One of our research officers has described it picturesquely:

> "As all the streams get finally deposited in the ocean so all commands, orders, production plans, instructions and circulars are thrown at the door of the V.L.W. headquarters. The V.L.Ws in fact are not only the eyes and the ears but hand and foot of the state government as also of the panchayat samiti and, perhaps. actually so of the panchayat. And yet they have to bear all responsibilities without enjoying any authority which rests either with the Block Development Officer or with the extension officers."

A V.L.W. is recruited by the panchayat samiti of the Zila Parishad Service Selection Commission. As such a V.L.W. is prominently an agent of the state government in general and that of the panchayat samiti in particular. Technically a V.L.W. has no institutional obligation to the panch or sarpanch. His main function is to advise the panchas on matters of implementation and execution of various plans and schemes formulated

by or entrusted with the panchayat samiti. A V.L.W. is also responsible for the fulfilment of the targets of his own area as set by the panchayat *samiti*. For this he is required to attend all meetings of the panchayats under his operation and be in constant contact with the inhabitants of the panchayat area and with the sarpanch and other members of the panchayat.

Here emerges an intriguing situation. So far as the execution of plans and programmes at the panchayat level are concerned it is the sarpanch in particular and other panchas in general who are responsible, A V.L.W. has little to do with the actual implementation of schemes. He is meant to give either to the panchayat members or to the local people some good piece of advice on technical matters about seed, fertiliser, soil preservation, irrigation facilities, loan provision, tools and implements facilities and the like. But the two obligations are so fused in actual life that it becomes difficult to apportion either the burden of the resposibilities or the extent of blame between a V.L W. and a sarpanch. One of our research officers has pointed out that the complication worsens when a V.L.W. feels that a sarpanch has no business to tamper with the scope of his activities as he is the agent of the state government directly recruited by its own employment agency while the sarpanch thinks that he is the monarch so far as the panchayat level is concerned and that he should supersede the V.L.W. in every matter. This confused state of affairs has come in the way of rapid progress of panchayats, particulary in relation to the developmental activities which both the sarpanch and the V.L.W. are expected to stimulate as being their primary obligation.

Another difficulty is that a V.L.W. is expected to operate in more than one panchayat with the result that the total number of villages under his operation go up to between 10 and 20. This makes the task of a V.L.W. fairly difficult. He can hardly concentrate on his work. The nature of his obligations demands minute operation with concentrated attention which he is in no position to give to every village. This naturally hampers progress in general and in relation to planned development in particular. It becomes all the more difficult when a V.L.W. has more than two panchayats in his area. In a panchayat samiti that we have studied 18 panchayats out of 21 are distributed among nine V.L.Ws with two under each while three panchayats are required to be looked after by one V.L.W. only.

A V.L.W. generally avoids attending panchayat meetings. He has a good excuse to contend that Sundays are holidays. The panchayat meetings are mostly held on Sundays. Even when meetings are held on weekdays, a V.L.W. can safely explain away his absence by claiming that he had been on tour.

To conclude in the words of one of our research officers, "the picture clearly shows that there is an absence of coordination between the functions and responsibilities of a V.L.W. and the duties and authority of a sarpanch or a panchayat."

Poor Morale

So far we have noted the particular difficulties of the extension officers and the V.L Ws. It can be said about the employees of the panchayati raj institutions in general that their morale is in a very poor state. A sense of insecurity of service looms large as they are always afraid of the displeasure of the political bosses. They also complain of interference by local politicians in their routine extension and administrative work. The actual cases of victimization statistically might not be too many. But even a single is sufficient to demoralize the entire work force. The following statement indicates the nature of transfers:

Nature of Transfers

No. of transfers	*Reason*
3	Because pradhan wanted the transfers.
1	At the desire of the person concerned.
1	The person concerned being unconcerned about his transfer.

It would appear that out of five tranfers three were made on the basis of unsatisfactory performance. The officials, rightly or wrongly, looked upon this merely as a cover for the displeasure of the non-officials which, however, is not true in all cases though it has psychological repurcussions on the morale of the services. Two of these officers were actually under suspension and the third was said to have been politically unacceptable to the pradhan.

Similarly many teachers who wanted to add to their qualifica-

tions were refused permission to appear at the public examination on the flimsy ground that they had not made themselves available for woking at the adult education centres.

Such cases create a psychological fear in the people which demoralizes them and makes them neglect their duty. The vikas adhikari and the extension officers may be in a better position to resist the non-officials because they are part of a regular cadre of service. They know that the non-officials can harass them only within limits In the case of employees of the panchayat samitis the non-officials are the masters. Under the impending shadow of a spoiling of their service career they forget all about their obligations and start currying favour with the pradhan or the sarpanch. It is necessary for satisfactory standards of service that the employees have a sense of security: they should not find themselves utterly helpless before self seeking non-official political chiefs.

Confused Pattern of Control

The crisis in the morale of the employees deepens on account of the confused pattern of control. There is a triarchical pattern of control over the panchayat samiti staff with the pradhan and *the sarpanch* as the *non-official political chiefs, the vikas adhikari* as the administrative head and the district level officers as technical heads of persons belonging to their respective departments. In strict theory there may not be anything wrong with multiple control, though one of its pre-requisites is that duplication of command in the same field should be avoided. This, is not always the case with regard to the panchayati raj institutions. Here both the vikas adhikari and the pradhan command in the same general field, which resembles almost a twilight zone, as the jurisdiction and powers of the pradhan and the B.D.O. have not been clearly demarcated. It may work as long as tne two go on well with each other. But when the pradhan and the vikas adhikari start pulling in different directions the employees are faced with an embarrassing situation. They have either to cast their lot with the pradhan thereby improving the security of service or they may join hands with the vikas adhikari if he is stronger than the pradhan. In most cases the former alternative is preferred and the vikas adhikari finds himself almost isolated. Usually, the employees, at least for quite some time, adopt the line of least

resistance for safeguarding their interests at the cost of their official obligations.

If the extension officers and the vikas adhikari fall out the latter is in a position to place obstacles in the way of extension officers performing their duties. The extension officers also may not give their best so that the vikas adhikari fails to stimulate developmental activities as much as is expected of him. This they will do when assured of the patronage of a pradhan who may not be getting on well with the vikas adhikari.

In the three panchayat samitis that we have studied such situations did not arise. But the tendencies were discernible. First, the extension officers cared more for the pradhan than for the vikas adhikari or their technical chiefs. Secondly, they would like to go out of their way to please their non-official chiefs. Here is a potential area of conflict as a dutiful vikas adhikari may not appreciate gestures of this type. In one of the panchayat samitis we felt the vikas adhikari was completely isolated as the entire panchayat samiti staff consisted of the pradhan's *yesmen*. It remains therefore an open question whether the vikas adhikari can really fulfil his obligations in such an intriguing pattern of administrative relationships.

Waste of Trained Manpower

It is also a matter of disappointment to note how at times trained manpower is wasted in the panchayati raj personnel administration. This should be prevented particularly in a developing economy like ours in which there is scarcity of trained manpower. We have already seen such waste in the use of extension officers in routine office work at the cost of extension work. Another illustration pertaining to the primary school teachers may be given. It is common knowledge that a large number of teachers are needed to man the primary schools. Soon after recruitment the primary school teachers are sent for training during which they are paid stipends. After their training they have to wait for long. It has been reported that a good number of them have to keep waiting for orders of posting for quite some time. At times, for want of proper placement, these persons are given all kinds of jobs in the panchayat samiti office and elsewhere. Steps should be taken to see that waste of this type does not occur.

Square Pegs in Round Holes

At the core of the administrative challenge facing panchayati raj is the perpetual problem of human adjustment The urbanised gentlemen with an imprint of western education (however limited it may be) are recruited for jobs with panchayati raj institutions They represent an altogether different culture and find themselves as misfits in the villages The young officials, as some of them would say half seriously, treat it as 'vanbas' (compulsory exile from cosy urban surroundings for a fixed period of time). It is therefore anybody's guess whether these officials can really have the right attitude towards rural people and their problems

To this may be added the fact that quite a few employees in panchayati raj services are so to earn livlihood, the jobs being something in the nature of a last resort to which they have turned in utter helplessness These are people who by neither upbringing nor temper, nor training have any understanding and sympathy for the villagers The rural setting, the mission to improve the lot of poor villagers and the consequent exalted view of their role do no thrill them This naturally is reflected on their administrative behaviour which at times does not come up to the ethical and performance norms It is this story of square pegs in round holes that explains the rumours of false statistics and fabricated progress reports and the none-too-inspiring bureaucratic overtones the administrative officials at the rural local levels sometimes assume The instances of this have not been many though in some cases trends towards rural bureaucracy may be discerned By and large panchayati raj has brought nearer the people the administrators who have not always had an open mind to understand them, to sympathise with their problems and to extend their helping hand

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the panchayati raj institutions are sandwiched today between two trends—democratisation of bureaucracy and bureaucratisation of non officials If bureaucratisation of non-officials, which is just a nascent trend today, becomes a reality, the democratisation of bureaucracy will naturally receive a set back There may develop a sort of non-official rural bureaucracy with all the disadvantages of administrative bureaucracy and added political overtones This is a development which has to be seriously watched and sincere efforts made to see that trends in this direction are nipped in the bud

Solution

Most of the problems discussed so far are those of adjustment which can be eased but not solved overnight by magic. It will take time; the mutual adjustment between officials and non-officials should be treated as a process that has perhaps already started. It may be pointed out that in the initial stages the process has to be both slow and difficult because the officials as well as non-officials started with some sort of prepossessed obsessions. The departments, the district level officers, the block development officer and his team did not take kindly to the panchayati raj institutions because they thought their administrative hegemony would be tampered with by uncouth laymen in the villages for whom they had and continue to have a certain contempt.

The non-officials who had been kept away from the source of authority for long and treated rather shabbily by the official hierarchy in the villages also think that it was their turn now to assert themselves. Basically therefore the problem of adjustment relates to the attitudes of the officials and the non-officials which influence their behaviour towards each other and create a kind of psychological resistance to adjustment. What has strengthened the process of resistance is the feeling in official circles as also among the public that panchayati raj is only a short-term experiment. However it is being realised now that panchayati raj has come to stay. It is also being recognised that the officials and non-officials are both essential wheels of panchayati raj. The bonds of psychological resistance are being loosened. Prepossessed notions also are being corrected on the anvil of experience. These are modest but potentially meaningful beginnings in the direction of adjustment regarded as a voluntary and a largely spontaneous process. Still, some suggestions are being made to help the process.

1. The panchayati raj administration should be organised on the principle of unity of command with B.D.O. as the administrative chief completely subordinate to the pradhan and the other officials exclusively under the B D.O. As an essential corollary to this the vikas adhikari also should not communicate directly to the staff placed under the extension officers but only through them. The duplication of comand and interference with the regular chain of hierarchy is to be avoided as far as possible. All communications, formal or informal, to any one in the panchayat samiti should be routed through the vikas adhikari. This might go a long

way to ensure unity of command. If the pradhan wants any favour it would also serve as a moral check on him who would hesitate in asking for favours over the head of the vikas adhikari. A bond of interdependence will be forged between the pradhan and the vikas adhikari the pradhan giving directions to the latter as the political chief and the B.D.O. transmitting and implementing them as the chief administrative officer. From this a number of advantages may accrue.

First, there will be a unity of command and the line of command will be clearly understood by the employees. There will neither be conflicting orders and no conflict of loyalties.

Secondly, as a result of unity of command it will naturally be possible to pin down responsibility which will then not be easily shirked. This would lead to efficient performance which in turn would help the tempo of developmental activities.

Thirdly, there will emerge an efficient system of supervision and control of the employees. It will be possible to take to task the defaulters who at present seek protection under the patronage of one of the two bosses (the pradhan or the B.D.O.) taking advantage of their personal maladjustments.

Finally, the respective official and non-official functionaries would enjoy prestige when the line of command is clearly demarcated. All officers would in fact catch popular imagination because the functionaries associated with the respective offices would take their jobs seriously under the pattern of unified command and control. After all prestige of office is closely linked with the performance of functionaries. This has not been realised by the panchayati raj functionaries so far. Perhaps they may do so if the suggestion about unity of command and supervision is accepted.

2. To improve the morale of the public services it may be suggested that the services belonging to the panchayati raj institutions may be organised at the state level. This will have several distinctive advantages the more important of which are :

First, the employees will have more avenues of promotion than are available to them today. Lack of promotion opportunities is a great drawback which significantly demoralises the public services. The organisation of panchayati raj services on the basis of the state will go a long way in improving the tone of the morale of the public services.

Secondly, the chances of the harassment of the panchayati

raj employees will be minimised because with the availability of a statewide cadre he will be in a position to seek transfer. In fact he would be put on par with employees on deputation.

Thirdly, the panchayati raj services are today attracting persons with inferior calibre. If they are organised as a statewide cadre with the incidental advantages of promotion and transfer they are likely to attract much better personnel.

Fourthly, a statewide cadre will also serve as an incentive for really good and efficient performance. As there are no avenues of promotion available at present, people are not interested in good work but move about developing contacts and making efforts to be in the good books of the powers that be.

Of course the placing of the panchayati raj services as a statewide cadre may not find favour with the non-officials because they would then have no control over the employees in the panchayati raj institutions which they administer as political chiefs. The danger is that the bureaucratic element will get so strengthened in the panchayati raj institutions through the creation of a statewide cadre that the non-officials may be relegated to the background and democratic decentralisation may even mean to the non-officials a situation in which they will be masters of the house without any power to control or direct its servants. It is possible to safeguard against this danger by leaving complete administrative control over the employees by way of keeping their service record, making entries therein, recommending their promotions, transfer, etc. in the hands of the non-official political chiefs who would naturally exercise this power on the advice of the B.D.O. By and large it is felt that creation of a statewide cadre will go a long way in improving the tone of the morale of the public services in panchayati raj.

3. An effort should also be made to see that persons with a rural background is recruited to the panchayati raj services with the clear understanding that their field of operation would be the village. The efforts at sermonising the urban youth who feels alienated from his moorings will not deliver the goods alone.

4. The government should make special efforts to see that its officers on deputation have special facilities as compensation for the disadvantages they have to put up with as B.D.Os and extension officers, particularly the lack of opportunity for their children's education, medical facilities, etc. Merely coercing them to serve in the villages on a compulsory basis will not help. Nor

will it help if it is expected that they will be drawn to the village services by motives of altruism. The Yugoslav experiment in democratic decentralisation which has given weightage to the facilities and improved service conditions of the employees deserves a mention in this regard. It is an investment which would pay long-term dividends not merely for the success of panchayati raj but also in terms of economic growth of the country primarily for which the panchayati raj institutions have been envisaged.

5. The absence of coordination between the functions and responsibility of the V.L.W. and the powers and obligations of a sarpanch or a panchayat can be overcome if a V.L.W. is appointed as V.L.W.-cum-secretary of a panchayat. For the present the job of a secretary is of an indigenous character and it is performed in a very ungainly manner. A sarpanch can appoint anyone belonging to the village which serves as headquarters of a panchayat or even belonging to some other village. He is often appointed as a full time worker even though the secretary always contrives to make it a part-time assignment because of the low emoluments the job carries. The bottleneck of poor pay can also be remedied if a V.L.W. is to function as a V.L.W.-cum-secretary of a panchayat. As a corollary to this it would follow that a V.L.W. should not be given charge of more than one panchayat. We can best put the advantages of this suggestion in the following words of one of our research officers which stem from his empirical observations in the field.

"This will provide a direct link of coordination and communication between the panchayat samiti and the panchayat. This will also ensure a greater concentration of mind and energy of a V.L.W., avoid the ungainly method of the panchayat secretary of doing things and will provide a clear picture of relationship between a V.L.W. and a sarpanch. Besides, unlike the panchayat secretary, a V.L.W. will function free of political and group influences and this will promote the production side of the area to the utmost. Additionally, to keep records and maintain accounts properly and collect requisite data so as to keep the right perspective of the panchayat before the concerned panchayat samiti a V.L.W. will be a better equipped hand than what a panchayat secretary has so far been. In fact much of the sluggishness will be erased from the surface of a panchayat if only the V.L.W. worked as the panchayat secretary as well."

XIII

The Impact of Panchayati Raj

IT MAY be asked in the end as to what is the overall impression of the nature, impact and prospects of panchayati raj that we are in a position to convey as a result of our empirical enquiry? It is neccssary to preface the presentation of the cumulative view implied in the query with the observation that we perhaps cannot avoid here repetition and overlapping of some of the views expressed in previous chapters. What we intend doing now is to summarise the more important findings of those chapters in a systemastic way so that a synthetic overall portrait of panchayati raj may be drawn.

A preliminary observation that needs to be made is that no final verdict can be given on the nature, role and prospects of panchayati raj for several reasons. First, the institution is barely four years old and the period can best be compared to the proverbially difficult phase of teething troubles that a child experiences. If we cast off the metaphor the implication is that the panchayati raj institutions have so far been only trying to establish themselves. It is therefore premature to hazard a final verdict on the working and prospects of panchayati raj.

Secondly, panchayati raj institutions are living and dynamic institutions. They would change and grow with the people. A sort of institutional dynamism is already evident and it has great potentialities for transforming the very nature of the movement. Panchayati raj institutions should therefore be studied as a continued process and, as such, the question of a final verdict on them is not merely premature but quite unscientific.

Thirdly, (and this follows from the second) the success or failure of the *panchayati raj institutions* is closely linked with the process and speed of social change in rural India. These institutions are in a rather dubious position in relation to social change: they are to motivate and bring about social change which by its very nature is a slow and halting process and are, at the same time, obstructed in their onward march by the absence or tardy progress of social change. In evaluating the role and progress of the institutions it should be remembered that they do not operate in a vacuum; their efficacy depends on the process of social change. It would be improper to swing between extremes of pessimism and optimism in determining the role and prospects of panchayati raj *at the present juncture.*

The number of variables that one encounters even in our limited sample study further make us cautious against any sweeping generalisations or dogmatic attitude about the ultimate destiny of panchayati raj institutions. It is seen that in one sector an institution fails at one place but succeeds in another. Again, an institution which may fail in one respect sometimes gives a good account of itself in another, even in the same area. We have also witnessed the potentiality of the panchayati raj institutions to improve themselves through the democratic process of *trial, error and correction*—a *bad non-official leader being* replaced by a good one and the replacement having its impact on the working of panchayati raj institutions.

Emerging Nature of Panchayati Raj

Some observations on the emerging nature of panchayati raj may be made in the light of our field experience to find out whether it reflects the public image of the concept and, more than that, its efficacy.

1. It may be pointed out that there is hardly any unanimity and clarity of thinking on the concept of panchayati raj among national and state leaders, intellectuals and administrators. A concept grows on the anvil of experience and develops new dimensions in the operational process. Still it should be possible to have clear thinking about the basic premises and theoretical norms of panchayati raj. The confusion that characterises the practice of panchayati raj for lack of conceptual clarity needs to be avoided.

2. There is a wide gap between the image of panchayati raj as painted by political leaders and its form in the letter of law. National and state leaders often make out that panchayati raj is a charter of rural self-government implying that the non-official leaders at the rural local levels would enjoy the maximum autonomy in decision making, planning, implementation, control of resources and their allocation and supervision and control. It may be relevant to recall the words of the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

"When we talked of panchayati raj many people I remembered were rather doubtful about the capacity of our people to shoulder the burden. I was certain they will make mistakes.... Nevertheless, we shall get over this and gradually develop this system of self-government at every stage. There is no half-way house. Either you trust them or you do not. Partly trusting them leaves you nowhere. Then they have no real responsibility and they flo not develop properly. That is why, having given this authority and power to them, you should not temper it with official interference. I am convinced of that. Let them make mistakes and let them suffer from them...,"[66]

In practice however panchayati raj in the letter of law and in operation has turned out to be a very limited concept. It is inhibited by the pattern of national planning and the desire of the bureaucracy to keep the reins on non-official leadership. Panchayati raj institutions by and large are performing just an agency role, as if they were a mere extension of the state governments administrative machinery, though according to the image built up by political leaders the institutions should be units of rural local government.

It may bo argued that the present situation is a passing phase and should be considered as the initial stage of an evolutionary phenomenon though everyone may not be inclined to take this view seriously. It may also be contended that the assignment of an agency role to panchayati raj institutions could not perhaps be helped. This argument carries greater

66. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the annual conference of State Ministers of Community Development and Panchayati Raj in New Delhi, August 3, 1962.

weight than the other. But the real danger of the gap between the public image of panchayati raj as conjured by the leaders and the image as reflected in the letter of law and its practice lies in that there may develop great expectations in the minds of the people which are not likely to be fulfilled. There might follow a period of crisis of expectations leading to frustration and disillusionment and loss of faith in the leadership. The democratic process demands therefore that our leadership should have the courage to take the nation into confidence and *tell the rural people about the limited* conceptual framework within which panchayati raj institutions should be expected to operate. This presupposes clear thinking on the part of the leadership about the concept of panchayati raj which is as yet absent.

3. There is also a gap between the image of panchayati raj the rural people have and the concept and the institutional image being formulated through law. An average villager looks upon the panchayat as *an all-purpose organisation.* He expects that all his difficulties and problems would find a solution near home, through the panchayat. But in practice, he is told that the panchayat as also the panchayat samiti is primarily a unit for development administration. This frustrates the villager and saps his enthusiasm for the panchayati raj movement itself. This *hiatus* is at least partly responsible for the limited enthusiasm the movement has evoked among the rural masses. It would be better therefore if panchayat members are permitted to raise all their felt problems at the floor of the panchayat. It should be made clear that the panchayat itself would not be able to tackle these problems but would draw the attention of the authorities to them.

It is argued that the rural folk's image of panchayats as an all-purpose organisation is neither historically borne out nor is it practicable today. This may be sound academic or bureaucratic *reasoning but does not convince* the average villager. Efforts have got to be made therefore on two fronts: first, to see that the statutory institutional image of panchayati raj squares as far as possible with the rural folk's image of it. Secondly, a publicity drive should be launched to explain the difficulties which hinder the bridging of the gulf further, let alone completely. It is the obligation of a democratic government to show regard for the people's image of an institution

and at the same time help them in formulating a proper image if they want to take the people with them.

4. It had been expected that panchayati raj would primarily be a development mechanism and make up the shortfalls of the community development programme. Thus the Balwant ray Mehta Report had projected the idea of democratic decentralisation and had formulated a blue-print for it.

In practice it has emerged primarily as a power mechanism. There is nothing unnatural about it. Panchayati raj being a decentralised form of democracy naturally tends to devolve power to however limited an extent it may be. It should not be surprising therefore if panchayati raj is looked upon by the non-official leadership primarily as a power mechanism. What is important to note is that it has not simultaneously become an equally vigorous development mechanism so far? It is also important to note that there is no inherent contradiction between panchayati raj as a power mechanism and as a development mechanism. The two can go hand in hand. But an equilibrium between the two has not come about and which at times hinders development. This is inherent in the logic of transition. A stage of equilibrium will be reached as leadership matures and healthy traditions develop in the panchayati raj movement. Such an equilibrium is part and parcel of the democratic process; of course the condition precedent is that it should be allowed to have a healthy growth. Efforts should therefore be made to remove the obstacles to the free play of the democratic process in the form of a well meaning system of checks and balances by way of supervision and control.

5. It may incidentally be mentioned that an average villager has failed to see any organic relationship between community development and panchayati raj as envisaged by the Balwant ray Mehta Report. In fact panchayati raj is looked upon more or less as a replacement mechanism for community development.

There are certain trends about the future image of panchayati raj which are in fact in the process of emergence. Already a kind of restlessness is evident among the people who resent panchayati raj institutions being reduced to the position of an "agency." A sort of institutional dynamism is growing which would usher in,

wherever these existed). They thus enjoyed a great deal of consensus as the basis of their claim to leadership. Fifthly, their role was more social than economic, developmental or political. Lastly, their role came into play on an *ad hoc* rather than on a regular basis.

The more important aspects of leadership emerging under panchayati raj are mentioned below.

(i) It is difficult to say whether the best persons available in the village have been attracted to panchayati raj institutions. Our experience shows however that if one were to judge the emerging leadership against the average quality of the rural people in the area we studied it has certainly been of an outstanding character (if not the best). Even if there were persons who felt shy of active politics but had better leadership potential it would be difficult to say whether they would have been superior leaders had they come forward. And then if the potentially superior leaders refuse to come forward through the democratic process they can hardly be helped.

(ii) The leadership that is emerging still comes from the affluent and traditionally higher echelons of rural society. The backward classes, in spite of their numerical strength, have rarely succeeded in claiming sarpanchship let alone pradhanship. They have aligned themselves with one representative or the other of the higher caste and lent him support on the basis of their numerical strength. They have not yet gathered enough courage and initiative to use the numerical strength to claim a higher status for themselves. It may be added however that they are at least conscious of their numerical strength and are in a position to bargain on its basis. Perhaps the day is not far off when they would use their numerical strength to assume leadership. This again should be taken as inherent in the democratic process itself.

(iii) In spite of the traditional orientation of the emerging leadership it is not entirely tradition-bound. Perhaps it can best be described as *'neo-traditional'*. This can be illustrated with reference to a few points as follows :

First, persons belonging to the higher strata of rural society are no more in a position to claim authority exclusively on the basis of their caste status, family or wealth. They have to rub shoulders with the average villager and court his support on the basis of equality. They have thus to behave like a commoner and

this in itself is a great change in the direction of formation of democratic attitudes in the emerging institutional leadership.

Secondly, the leadership which is now emerging in the rural areas can perhaps be best described as material-benefits-oriented. In the pre-panchayati raj period a person could claim leadership status in the village on the basis of his family, caste or economic status. There is now a transformation in the very base of rural leadership. A person who can provide material benefits and services to the rural population can become their leader. Even at the risk of digression it may be mentioned that the material benefits orientation to the character of emerging leadership is the direct consequence of the fact that panchayati raj in a way succeeds or is closely linked with the community development programme which was a charter of material development for the rural people. As panchayati raj institutions are to largely carry out the community development programme and that also through the instrumentality of non-officials the village leader today is looked upon as the medium for the flow of material benefits and services. This new orientation to the character of leadership cuts across the traditional hierarchical pattern of village leadership and is a positive advance in the direction of democracy at the rural local levels.

Thirdly, the emerging rural leadership is a combination of power and development orientations. Such a combination is inherent in the very nature of panchayati raj. Till now a balanced partnership between these two orientations (that is, development and power) has not come about and the balance appears to tilt in the direction of power. We feel however that this imbalance represents a transitional phase and would ultimately become a part and parcel of the democratic process itself. What is however important in the context of the emerging neo-traditional leadership is the imprint of development consciousness. The new leadership understands the language and, to some extent, even the objectives and programmes of planning. The process of development consciousness is expected gradually to percolate from the leaders down to the rural people. This is the earnest of a rich potential, though concrete beginnings in this direction are not yet much perceptible.

Lastly, the new leader partly because of his comparatively young age, of development orientation and of the exigencies of the

situation has lesser resistance to social change or is inclined to accept demands of modernisation. However he has not yet even realised the importance of his role as an agent of social change let alone performing this role. The new leader may still be suffering in his sub-conscious from a sense of superiority complex as far as the weaker sections of society are concerned, but he cannot afford to treat them as untouchables publicly. In quite a few cases, where panchas belonging to the weaker sections of society have been elected into office, he has to work with them.

2. Panchayati Raj Politics

The more important of the political consequences of panchayati raj as they have been evident in practice are as follows :

(i) A build-up for power almost from the bottom upwards is *coming about.* The local leader is developing strong links with the state leaders, particularly ministers who in enlightened self-interest patronise him because they know that he is more or less to serve as a vote bank for his area. Thus panchayati raj has brought about a political framework for the development of a pattern of closer contact between local and state leadership.

There are a few connected issues of the broad postulate posed here. First, it may be enquired: "Where does the M.L.A. stand in this emerging pattern of state-local relationships?" The pradhan at the panchayat samiti level is a potential M.L.A. and, as such, is a close rival of his. The M.L.As have naturally two options open to them—first to develop close links with the pradhan and, secondly, to pose as his rival and try to dislodge him from power. Both the attitudes have been noticed in operation. Whatever the attitude the M.L A. may adopt he is certainly unhappy on finding that his unquestioned supremacy does not exist any more. There is however a positive side to it also: the M.L.A. now cannot afford to neglect his constituency because he always harbours the fear that the pradhan would not miss the opportunity and would exploit it to his advantage.

Secondly, an allied question of equal importance is : "How does state politics affect rural politics?" So far it has only had a tangential impact. Ministers and other influential persons at the state level have influence zones at the rural level. But the pradhan has an individuality of his own and, as such, his panchayat samiti cannot be treated by the state level politicians as a pocket borough.

Thirdly, it may also be asked : "Can we expect panchayati raj institutions to work on a non-party basis in view of the pattern of state rural-local relationships that is emerging?" The answer is in the negative. The political parties are already in the field though very often informally. As seen earlier, the third general elections have highlighted the importance of the panchayati raj institutions as vote banks. Since then the parties have realised that they must strengthen their hold on panchayati raj institutions in their enlightened self-interest. Our field experience shows that the arrival of parties at the rural arena is inevitable. In fact the process is on. This should not mean that national or state level issues would dominate the politics of panchayati raj. The political parties shall have to develop a limited rural programme to outwit each other in winning the support of the rural folk. The process in this direction also has begun.

Lastly, an anxious query could be: "What is the impact of the emerging pattern of state-local relationship on panchayati raj administration?" The impact is demoralising on the staff working at the panchayat samiti level. Whether on deputation or belonging to the panchayat samiti or zila parishad service the staff knows that the non-officials have links with state leadership and can harass them. They also have a feeling that even when the non-official is in the wrong he may be shielded for political reasons. Demoralization of this kind cannot perhaps be helped unless state level politicians develop healthy conventions of non-interference with the law and administration in the larger interests of planned development and panchayati raj institutions.

(ii) It is universally acknowledged that political consciousness has increased under panchayati raj. An average villager is more conscious of his rights today than before. He has also developed self-confidence and it is expected that gradually this may help him to overcome the psychology of *Ma Bap* government.

Some qualifying remarks may be made. First, civic consciousness which means awareness of one's obligations to the community has not grown simultaneously with the consciousness of the villager's rights. This applies to many cases of emerging leadership also.

Secondly, an average villager does not always have an informed political consciousness. The implication is that he is still satisfied with the hazy knowledge of the political affairs and processes

and does not bother to get to know them intimately and on his own. This perhaps cannot be helped in view of the massive illiteracy in rural India.

Thirdly, political consciousness is not in all cases constructive. Quite often it begins and ends with uninformed criticism or in an effort to build or join power alliances and successful power factions. It has not meant an effort to contribute one's instructed judgment to the good of the community which, according to Laski, is the essence of creative citizenship.

(iii) Panchayati raj institutions have also provided a training ground in democracy to the rural people who have so far been denied access to the avenues of power. It is in this sense that panchayati raj becomes a revolutionary step. The emerging rural leadership still is more a silent spectator than an active partner in the deliberations and working of panchayati raj institutions. It is also true that power has come to be concentrated in the hands of the pradhan and to some extent of the sarpanch. The panch is still too docile to come into his own. It is also a fact that villagers by and large and emerging leaders often harbour a psychology of *Ma Bap* government.

It is gratifying that the proceedings of the panchayati raj institutions have been orderly. Members show respect to the decisions of the chair. The chairman encourages discussion. It is also equally important that efforts are made to reach a consensus and arrive at decisions unanimously rather than with the use and help of brute majority. These are healthy democratic conventions which should go a long way in strengthening not merely panchayati raj institutions but in building up the foundations of democracy on a sound footing.

3. Panchayati Raj and Democracy

What is the likely impact of panchayati raj on the prospects of Indian democracy? A large ground has already been covered in this regard. The following two points may be reiterated specifically:

(i) Power has been dispersed at rural local levels and several people have come to taste it. It would thus be difficult to establish a dictatorship or military autocracy in the country which would mean in the ultimate analysis deprivation for a large mass of people not merely of their political rights and privileges

but of power. Power is supremely attractive at all levels and perhaps most of all at rural local levels where people have been suppressed through the ages. It is only now that they are well on the way to becoming partners in the management of their own affairs.

It is sometimes contended that panchayati raj institutions may become disruptive forces because of the centrifugal character inherent in them as autonomous units of rural local government. But history tells us that the denial of autonomy and the right to participate in the management of one's own affairs strengthens divisive tendencies. Given autonomy to manage their affairs at the local levels people develop a sense of belonging to the nation.

(ii) It should not be ignored however that factions have deepened under panchayati raj. Elections have sometimes caused and, in more cases than one, have deepened previous personal, family or traditional cleavages. Every panchayat, following in the footsteps of the panchayat samiti, is divided into two camps today—the majority and the minority camp. The most undemocratic repercussion of the growth of political cleavage is that the leaders of the majority group in most cases see to it that all benefits go to their camp followers only. The panchayats belonging to the minority group has become not merely the political 'havenots' but also the economic 'havenots'. Panchayati raj has not cultivated the correct democratic attitude that 'you are as important as I am' and not that 'I am as important as you are.' The discriminatory trends in panchayati raj should be checked.

Administrative Consequences

In a way the administrative consequences originate in the politics of panchayati raj and, as such, the study of the political impact would not be complete without a passing reference to the administrative consequences that flow from it. The more important of these are as follows :

(i) As seen in the chapters titled "The Political Umbrella" and "Web of Administrative Relationship" one of the most baffling issues facing panchayati raj is the problem of official and non-official relationship, particularly that between the B.D.O. and the pradhan. Our experience has been that if the relationship

between these two key functionaries—one official and the other non-official—is harmonious, the panchayati raj mechanism has a smooth running. In most cases however the two have failed to adjust with each other and this has had serious repurcussions not merely on the working of the panchayati raj institutions *but on* the implementation of the development programmes.

It should be emphasised that the personality factor is of key importance in bringing about a harmonious relationship between these two functionaries both of whom most often have to share the blame for the lack of effort in the direction of mutual adjustment. But there is nothing to be pessimistic about because their relationship will get steadied as panchayati raj gets firmly rooted. We have seen how a tactful and sincere B.D.O. or a pradhan who believes in the progress of his panchayat samiti and realises the importance of his role succeeds in developing reasonably good relations with his official and the non-official counterpart.

It may be added that the state level politicians and administrators have a role to play in the process of adjustment. The state leaders should not harass the administrators at the instance of local politicians. Similarly, state level administrators should not try to shield the B.D.Os who are guilty of negligence and improper treatment of the non-officials. We should like to emphasize that the problem of relationship between the officials and the non-officials is necessarily a problem of human relationship. Administrative rules and regulations and other devices may be helpful. But the most important factor is the personal effort of the B.D.O. and the pradhan.

(ii) Personal differences between the pradhan and the B.D.O. inhibit the working of the administrative machinery at the block level. The panchayat samiti staff gets divided into the groups of the B.D.O. and the pradhan. Worse, sometimes even the extension officers whose work is in the field are drawn into the cockpit of block level politics. They try to toe the line of the winning partner and this amounts to supporting the pradhan in most cases. Having done this they neglect their obligations and sometimes even act on the whims and caprices of the dominating group. The morale of the staff serving at the block level is altogether low and coordination between the functionaries lacking. Often feelings of mutual trust and comradeship in a common cause are missing. All this can be traced substantially, if not

exclusively, to the pattern of relationship between the pradhan and the B.D.O. which thus becomes the focal point in the scheme of panchayati raj.

(iii) It may also be noted that the dispersal of authority at the rural local levels has not minimised the work-load either at the state level or at the block level. Our general impression is (and it is corroborated both by the top administrators at the state level and the officials at the block level) that paper work has increased since the advent of panchayati raj. The panchayat samiti office is run like any other bureaucratic machinery and the officials at the block level are more concerned with sending reports, filling proformas and replying to enquiries than with their field assignments in connection with development programmes.

The collector's office and, more than that, the development department have similarly to do considerable paper work because they are genuinely afraid that the administrative apple cart would otherwise topple down in the wake of panchayati raj. The fear is understandable but is certainly not justified in all cases. Trust of the people is the basic postulate of panchayati raj and the panchayati raj institutions have to be given a fair trial on the basis of this fundamental of democracy. Of course brakes should be there but their use should not be so frequent as to result in overwhelming paper work which inhibits initiative at the block level and reduces supervision and control at the higher levels to a mere paper ritual. The paper work has got to be rationalised and reduced as much and as early as possible because bureaucratic habits, once cultivated, die hard.

(iv) Lastly, while the block level administration is getting somewhat democratized there is a trend which indicates that non-officials are getting bureaucratized. The average villager is nearer the administration today than in the pre-panchayati raj period. He now moves about with greater self-confidence to the office of the block development officer and not with the drooping spirits of a person who is in quest of a *bakshish*. The block level administrator also does not treat the villager now with indifference or contempt. He knows that he is there to serve him and promote his interest. This democratisation of administration is a positive achievement of panchayati raj.

There is however a tendency (perhaps less perceptible and less vigorous) which indicates that the non-officials have started talk-

Appendix B

Note on panchayat samitis' budgets for 1962-63

1 At the time of preparation of the budgets of the panchayat samitis there was no information regarding the grants from the government departments Naturally the budgets of the panchayat samitis are being prepared on the basis of the grants of the preceding year The panchayat samitis should, therefore, revise their budgets as soon as the necessary information to that effect is received from all the departments

2 The decisions taken at recent pancha sammelans have a direct relations to the budgets The panchayat samitis should therefore, make necessary provisions on the basis of the targets fixed at these sammelans and inform the zila parishad immediately

3 Last year it was instructed that there should be provision for monetary help for the zila parishad Even this year many panchayat samiti budgets do not have such provision which should be kept

4 Similarly, many panchayat samitis did not keep any provision for the payment of outstanding bill of the audit examiner This year therefore, there should be such provision so that last year's dues of fees can be cleared

5. There should have been a supplement to the budget so that the figures of other expenditure could be mentioned with the proposed expenditure Besides there should be a detailed note on expenditure on budget, which is being sent by a few panchayat samitis *In the absence of such notes it becomes difficult for the* members to consider *the budget*

6 Under the head of community administration almost all have more expenditure than the grants The actual expenses of salary and allowances cannot be curtailed so that less money is spent on administration out of the samitis '*own income* and more *on production* programmes etc The dates of the meetings of the various committees should be adjusted in such a way that the expenditure incurred on travelling by the members can be saved

7 It was asked last year that a memorandum on yearly targets be sent along with the budget but except a few, other panchayat samitis have not paid any attention to it

8 Panchayat samitis have been formed long ago and the

time has come when they should collect the instalments of loan advanced by them. The samitis should be vigilant in this connection and should plan to collect the money in time so that the money can be used again. The loan advanced by the government should also be returned along with it so that panchayat samitis may be relieved of the burden. Necessary provision to that effect should be kept in the budget itself.

9. Last year it was made clear that expenditure should be proposed after considering the plans of free fund money because it involves the question of public co-operation. It is better to enclose a separate statement along with the budget.

10. Many panchayat samitis have completed the survey of small irrigation plans and made estimates too. If the panchayat samiti gives priority to production naturally it becomes necessary to have a provision in the budget after considering the capacity of peoples 'shramdan'. Some panchayat samitis had decided to give Rs. 5 to each scheduled tribes and scheduled caste person and some panchayat samitis should ponder it whether it would keep provision in the budget this year also for such good work.

11. This year panchayat samitis have achieved commendable success in increasing their own sources of income but, besides three panchayat samitis, none has explained as to how this money shall be spent. This time it was decided at the panch sammelan that a portion of the panchayat samitis' income should be given to the panchayats in the shape of grant after deciding upon some basis. This money can be spent by the panchayat according to the decisions of the gram sabha on local development works. It can get the work completed either through 'shramdan' or can have development work through the local institutions. It is, therefore, suggested that each panchayat samiti should distribute at least half of its income to this effect which should be kept in the budget itself.

12. Each panchayat samiti should help the local institutions such as *Navyuvak Mandal, Mahila Mandal, Siksha Samiti* etc., by giving grants and provision for such grants can be made from the concerned subject of the community development budget or the panchayat samiti can give it from its own resources.

Sd.
District Development Officer
Jaipur

Appendix C

TAXATION PROBLEMS

According to the Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads Act 1959 (Sec. 33) and Rajasthan Panchayat Samitis Finance and Taxation Rules 1960, a panchayat samiti can impose a variety of taxes for increasing its income. However, provisions in this regard did not inspire the panchayat samiti to raise income by imposing any kind of tax in its area. Though the item of imposing certain taxes was put on the panchayat samitis' general meeting agenda on a number of occasions and was also discussed by the members of the panchayat samiti, *the non-official attitude always remained one of avoiding any final decision and of keeping the matter lingering and inconclusive.* It is to be noted that it was always the vikas adhikari who would propose the imposition of certain taxes by the panchayat samiti. Tax proposals should thus be treated as official moves. The story of resistance of non-officials to the taxation proposals has followed a chronological course which is traced below :

(i) It was first proposed at the panchayat samiti general meeting on *5-9-1960* that certain taxes should be imposed as the concerned standing committee had recommended them. The panchayat samiti members were not ready to discuss the proposal and suggested that the standing committee should reconsider the proposal and fix rates of the taxes to be imposed. The proposal was thus postponed to a future meeting.

(ii) It was again on *18-2-1961* that the vikas adhikari proposed at the panchayat samiti general meeting that panchayats and panchayat samitis should impose certain taxes according to the provisions of the act and rules so that the dismal financial conditions of these bodies could be improved. The panchayat samiti members suggested that such a proposal should first be discussed and decided at the standing committee meeting and the recommendations of the committee placed before the panchayat samiti general meeting.

(iii) It was again at a general meeting of the panchayat samiti held on *5-8-1961* that financial problems of the panchayat were discussed and it was suggested by the vikas adhikari that panchayats should impose and collect certain taxes as provided for in the Act for solving the resources difficulties. It was suggested by

one sarpanch that panchayats should collect community work tax and by another sarpanch, that panchayats should impose tax on death feast (*Nukta*) and *Gangoj*. Panchayat samiti members were passive listeners to all these proposals and suggested that these should be communicated to all the panchayats for inviting suggestions and reactions in this regard. Then only a decision was possible.

(iv) At the panchayat samiti general meeting held on *5-9-1961* the vikas adhikari placed before the members for final decision a list of particulars about various tax items and tax rates as proposed and recommended by the standing committee. Members refused to take any decision then and suggested that the list should be published so that people's reactions and objections may be known.

(v) At the panchayat samiti general meeting held on *5-11-1961* the vikas adhikari once again drew the attention of the members to the tax proposals discussed at the previous meetings. He informed them that no objections were received from the public with regard to the tax proposals. He also advised the members to approve the tax proposals and rates finally as the matter had been lingering for long.

But members, suggested that the standing committee should reconsider the tax proposals once again and then these should be referred to the panchayat samiti members for final dicision.

(vi) The vikash adhikari again took initiative at the panchayat samiti general meeting on *12-3-1962*. Now the members could not find any excuse to avoid the matter and took refuge, as it were, in offering a general denunciation of all the tax proposals. Members were of the opinion that (a) heavy taxes had already been imposed by the central and state governments and panchayat samiti and panchayats should not add to the grievance of the people; (b) village people were strongly opposed to imposition of taxes and any such step on the part of the panchayat samiti or panchayats would compromise with the reputation and approach of these institutions; and (c) the task of imposing any tax might look easy but would be extremely difficult for the panchayat samiti or panchayats to collect the tax amount in time and in full.

(vii) It was at the panchayat samiti general meeting held on *5-3-1963* that the vikas adhikari proposed the imposition of edu-

cation cess tax while placing the panchayat samiti budget of 1963-64. The proposed tax rate was 25 np. per head per year on the population basis and an annual return exceeding Rs. 20,000 in total was expected thereby. The pradhan also supported the proposal but with hesitation because he was aware that even his group would line up in opposing the proposal. The tax proposal was not a happy idea for the panchayat samiti members and it was strongly opposed. However, a committee of pradhan, vikas adhikari and chairmen of all the standing committees was formed to discuss the proposal at length and suggest whether such a tax should be imposed or not The committee was called twice to hold its meetings but on both occasions there was no quorum.

Taxation is human problem with political overtones and, as the above case study shows, the non-officials of the D panchayat samiti could not face up to the immediate adverse impact of tax imposition. Despite consistent official canvassing they refused to shed their ingrained resistance to taxation.

Appendix D

IMPROVING FINANCES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

At the outset we may record our indebtedness to the authors of the *Report on the Study Team of Panchayati Raj Finances, 1963* who have done considerable constructive thinking on the subject and made our task eassier. As will be obvious from what follows later we have heavily drawn upon their recommendations.

The more important suggestions that we have to make are:

(i) To remove the doubts and uncertainty arising out of the tapering off of the community development budget for blocks which would soon be entering the post-stage II, steps should be initiated at the highest levels to evolve uniform development budgets for all the panchayat samitis in the state.*

(ii) The pathetic paucity of resources at the panchayat level deserves urgent attention. A multi-dimensional effort has to be made in this regard. First, its bare subsistance at the financial level should be guaranteed by the state writing off its establishment charges and providing for secretarial assistance.** Secondly, the practice of diverting part of the panchayat resources to maintain the nyaya panchayats should be given up.*** Thirdly, the panchayats should also be granted the benefits of shared resources, wherever possible.**** Lastly, the panchayats which can

*The report of the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances 1963, Ministry of Community Development and Co-operation, Government of India, New Delhi (Hereinafter referred to as *The Panchayati Raj Finances Report*) has given careful thought to the problem in section 6 of the report which deals with resources of panchayat samitis. Their considered recommendation in this regard deserves a mention here:

"The procedure followed in Madras of pooling all grants under the community development schematic budget and those from state departments and of evolving a development schematic budget for samiti may be examined by all other state governments. The Government of India should encourage the state to adopt the procedure." (6.4, p. 54.)

**The Panchayati Raj Finances Report has made a useful suggestion in this regard: "A basic minimum maintenance grant of Re. 1 per capita should be given to every panchayat and this should be shared equally by state and central governments." (*Ibid*, 4.34, p. 52.) The authors of the report also hold: "The state assistance. if any, for the whole or part of the salary of secretary of panchayat should be in the form of purposive grant. Secretary should be paid directly by the panchayat." (4.30, p.52.)

*** *Cf.* The observation of the above report: The expenditure on nyaya panchayats should be met by the government on the net cost basis, preferably at the samiti level" (*Ibid*, 4.18 p.51.)

****The Panchayati Raj Finances Report has suggested a number of such resources which can be shared, the more important of them being (i) pilgrim tax, 4.16, p.51 (ii) a reasonable share of net income from fairs and markets, 4.24 p.52, (iii) surcharge on stamp duty on the value of property, 4.28, p.52 (iv) entertainment tax collected by the state in rural areas, 4.29, p.52 etc.

raise at best meagre resources of their own should be especially assisted.*

(iii) The panchayats belonging to the minority faction in the panchayat samiti area should be safeguarded against discrimination in the distribution of benefits by the panchayat samitis It should be prescribed that a minimum percentage of total funds for developmental purposes should reach every panchayat.

✓(iv) The panchayats should be helped to raise their own resources by taking up the responsibility of levying taxes courageously which these institutions have been shirking for fear of becoming unpopular We endorse the following recommendation of the resources on panchayati raj finances in this regard

"(1) House tax, profession tax and vehicle tax should be compulsory taxes of panchayats, (2) minimum and maximum rates of compulsory taxes should be prescribed, (3) house tax may be levied on the basis of capital value of the house, (4) there should be no exemption from the levy of house tax, (5) an independent agency for valuation of houses may be set up and (6) the maximum and minimum rates of house tax based on capital value of houses may be as follows

(a) On a house of capital value not exceeding Rs. 250	Minimum 25 np and maximum Re 1
(b) On a house of capital value ranging from Rs 251 to Rs 500.	Minimum 50 np and maximum Rs 2
(c) On a house of capital value ranging from Rs 501 to Rs 1000	Minimum Re 1 and maximum Rs 5
(d) On a house of capital value of over Rs 1000	For every increase of Rs 500 or part thereof the increase in the minimum and maximum rate to be 50 np and Rs 2 50 respectively "**

*Cf The recommendation of the Report on Panchayati Raj Finances according to their sistance is given to

** The Report . *op. cit*, p 50

(v) The panchayats and panchayat samitis may also adopt the practice of collecting *ad hoc* levies for executing specific projects as the yields in this case are likely to be larger than in the case of general purpose taxation.

(vi) All decisions pertaining to distribution of funds, especially those relating to loans and subsidies to various individuals, should be announced at the gram sabha meetings and decisions regarding selection of panchayats and panchayati-wise distribution of funds should be decided by a three-fourth majority.

(vii) In order to provide continuity to the schemes and projects initiated by the various panchayati raj bodies the large fluctuations in yearly receipts and expenditures should be smoothened by drawing up uniform comprehensive five-yearly plans of resource-expenditure.

(viii) To streamline the financial administration of panchayati raj institutions the accounting machinery, especially at the panchayat samiti level, should be strengthened and the system of auditing placed on a more regular footing.* A number of steps can be suggested in this regard here. First, the panchayat secretary should have special training in accounts-keeping which should be made his statutory obligation under the Act. It should be possible for him to cope with this responsibility when the pattern of one V.L.W.-cum-panchayat secretary per panchayat (which is in the offing) is successfully evolved. Secondly, a system of internal audit at the intra-institutional level (that is with the help of an agency, attached to the zila parishad) be developed, in

* Some of the useful recommendations of the *Report on Panchayati Raj Finances* in this regard are :

1. Every panchayat should be inspected at least once in three months by panchayat extension officer to ensure that there is no misappropriation or falsification of accounts (9.11, p. 57.)
2. A weekly statement of receipts and expenditure should be sent by each panchayat to its samiti office where it should be scrutinised and filed properly. (9.12, p.57.)
3. All receipts of a panchayat should as far as possible be deposited in a scheduled or cooperative bank or post office savings bank and money for expenses drawn strictly according to rules and procedures. (9.13, p. 57.)
4. A special branch in the office of Examiner of Local Fund Audit should be organised in each state to carry out regularly the audit of the accounts of panchayati raj institutions. (9.15, p. 58.)
5. It should be impressed upon panchayats and samitis that defects pointed out by auditors should be promptly remedied and satisfactory explanation offered to meet the audit objection. (1.15, p. 58.)
6. A special meeting of panchayat/samiti should be held for consideration of the report within 30 days of its receipt, and the result of discussion should be sent to supervising authority. (9.15, p. 58.)

addition to the regular audit facilities. Thirdly, the objections raised in the audit report should merit an early and serious attention of the panchayati raj institutions. The audit report and the action taken on it should be placed before the gram sabha. Lastly, the accounting procedure in regard to the panchayati raj institutions should also be simplified. The *Report on Panchayati Raj Finances* has made a useful suggestion in this regard as follows :

> "The form of panchayat accounts should be simple and should indicate independently the normal recurring receipts on one side and the committed expenditure on the other. Special grants, contributions, its own matching contribution and loans for development projects should be separately shown on the receipt side and expenditure on development works, either its own or of samiti, should be shown on the expenditure side." (9.10, p.57.)

(ix) It is also necessary that the intimation of available funds to panchayati raj institutions is made well in advance* so that budget formulations at the rural local levels may not be reduced to a formality, *planning from below* in financial terms may become a reality (to whatever extent it is possible under our system of centralised planning) and there may not come about unplanned and hurried frittering away of resources on the eve of the closing of the financial year.

(x) There should be some flexibility in the resource and expenditure pattern of panchayati raj finances so that panchayati raj institutions may develop initiative with freedom to control budgetary resources within prescribed limits. They** should also have a quota of funds which they may be free to plan for, allocate and spend.

[illegible]

**Some useful suggestions of the *Report on Panchayati Raj Finances* are :

1. To enable samitis to participate in the evolution of the fourth plan, the central and state governments may intimate to them in advance the minimum and maximum financial limits that can be made available to them by way of grants and loans. (6.7, p. 54.)

[illegible] should be [illegible] so long as [illegible] readjust the [illegible] the people, [illegible]

(xi) We also endorse the following recommendations of the *Report on Panchayati Raj Finances:*

1. The rate of cycle tax should be fixed by panchayat samiti and made uniformly applicable throughout its area. Steps should be taken to see that municipalities within the area of samiti levy the tax at the same rate (4.13, p. 50.)

2. Vehicle tax should be levied on all vehicles including bicycles. Motor vehicles should continue to be exempted. The minimum rate of vehicle tax should be Rs. 2 per annum for all vehicles and the maximum, Rs. 4 per cycle and Rs. 10 per bullock-cart. (4.14, p. 50.)

3. Pilgrim tax should preferably be levied by panchayat samiti or zila parishad, a part of the proceeds being given to panchayats in the area of which pilgrim centres are located and the rest utilized for the common benefit of the area of samiti or of the district. The expenditure incurred in this connection should be shared suitably by concerned panchayat, samiti and zila parishad (4.16, p. 51.)

4. The levy of fees for water supply, drainage, street lighting and conservancy should be optional. Where water supply, drainage or electric lighting is provided through loans, panchayat should have the right to charge a fee from beneficiaries. The basis for fixing the rate of such fees may be the amount needed for servicing the loan or for covering the liability incurred in providing the service. (4.17, p. 51.)

5. The proceeds of sale of abadi land should be used only for expenditure which will create permanent assets for panchayat. (4.21, p. 51.)

6. In the case of markets classified as samiti and zila parishad markets a reasonable share of net income, may be one-third subject to a maximum of one rupee per capita, should be given to panchayats in the area of which fair is held or market is organised. (4.24, p. 52.)

7. Surcharge on stamp duty not exceeding 5 per cent of the value of property should be levied and collected by state govern-

3. An amount of Rs. 400 crores @ Rs. 10 per capita of rural population should be allotted in the fourth plan for unspecified local development works to be given on a matching basis. (6,8, p. 54.)

ment. The proceeds within the area of a samiti should be distributed in an equitable manner among that samiti and its panchayats. (4.28, p. 52.)

8. The whole or a part of entertainment tax collected by state in rural areas should be shared with panchayats and samitis. Panchayats and samitis may levy a show tax in addition. (4.29, p. 52.)

9. A annual average per capita grant of Re. 1 should be made to each samiti to be shared equally by the state and central governments and to be earmarked for maintenance of staff on an agreed pattern. The Centre's share of the grant may be met by suitable adjustments within the grants now being made by it. (6.5, p. 54.)

10. There should be no confusion and overlapping in the taxation powers of panchayat samiti and zila parishad. (6.14, p. 55.)

11. A suitable penalty, of say 10 per cent, may be levied on all arrears of taxes and this penalty utilised by the revenue authorities or samitis for appointing special staff for collection of arrears. (9.5, p. 57.)

12. The budget of samiti should reflect all receipts and expenditure, whether of the community development programme, its own resources, grants from development departments, contributions from panchayats or loans raised by it. The expenditure should include the salaries of all staff even if they are paid directly by government. The payment by government for this purpose should be shown as receipt. (9.10, p. 57.)

13. All grants and subventions, including specific and purposive departmental grants, may be pooled at the state level and disbursed in a consolidated form to various panchayati raj institutions.

Appendix E

SUMMARY OF GRAM SABHA RULES*

1. The sarpanch or upsarpanch shall convene such meetings.

2. At least two half-yearly meetings must be called.

3. Ordinarily those meetings shall be held in the months of May and October.

4. The meeting shall be held at the village where the office of the panchayat is situated.

5. All the adult residents of the panchayat circle will be entitled to take part in it.

6. A notice of the meeting stating its day and hour as well as the agenda should be given by :

(i) affixing it at one or more conspicuous places in every village in the panchayat circle, and

(ii) by announcing it by beat of drum.

7. The sarpanch or upsarpanch or any other panch close-by shall preside.

8. At the first meeting the budget of the panchayat shall be placed before the meeting and the views of the residents thereon recorded.

9. At all such meetings the work programmes undertaken by the panchayat shall be explained and their progress reviewed.

10. The views recorded at the gram sabha meetings shall be presented to the next panchayat meetings by the presiding officer.

11. If 100 adult residents, or 25% of the total adult residents of the panchayat circle make a request for calling a meeting of the gram sabha and also indicate its time and agenda the sarpanch must call a general meeting of the adult residents.

12. If the sarpanch fails to call such a meeting the signatories may themselves call the meeting giving due notice but such a meeting can only be called at the place where the panchayat office is situated.

* *Vide : The Rajasthan Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat (General) Rules 1961.* Government Central Press, Jaipur, Sec. 65-69, pp. 23-24.

Appendix F

Record of Gram Sabha

Panchayat samiti	Panchayat	Date	Total attendance	Attendance of pradhan*	Attendance of sarpanch*	No. of exten. officers	Attendance of B.D.O.*	Arrangements for Feast	Arrangements for Film	Appraisal
I. Gram sabhas held in panchayats under study										
'D'	'D'	18-10-62	150	A	A	1	A	No	No	Failure
	'G'	23-10-62	10	A	P	1	P	No	No	Failure (no meeting)
	'S'	24-10-62	20	A	P	1	A	No	No	Failure
	'H'	13-10-62	100	A	A	Nil	A	No	No	Quite Successful
'G'	'K'	16-10-62	300	A	P	10	P	No	Yes	Successful
	'S'	20-10-62	300	P	P	10	P	No	Yes	Successful
	'H'	22-10-62	200	A	P	8	P	No	Yes	Successful
	'R'	23-10-62	200	A	P	10	P	No	Yes	Successful
'S'	'S'	5-11-62	40	P	P	1	A	No	No	Average
	'Gg'	18-10-62	3	A	A	Nil	A	No	No	Failure (no meeting)
	'Db'	22-10-62	35	A	P	Nil	A	No	No	Successful
	'Ch'	13-10-62	20	A	A	1	A	No	No	Partially successful

II. Gram sabhas held in other panchayats

'J'	'NJ'	6-10-62	6	A	A	3	A	No	No	Failure
	'S'	10-10-62	100	P	P	10	A	Yes	Yes	Successful
	'M'	11-10-62	200	P	P	10	A	Yes	Yes	Successful
	'JK'	12-10-62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	No meeting
	'J'	13-10-62	300	A	P	1	P	No	Yes	Successful
	'H'	15-10-62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	No meeting
	'D'	17-10-62	500	P	P	1	A	Yes	No	Failure
	'S'	18-10-62	200	P	P	5	A	Yes	Yes	Successful
	'P'	19-10-62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	No meeting
	'M'	10-10-62	300	P	P	6	A	No	Yes	Failure
	'B'	21-10-62	200	P	P	3	A	No	Yes	Successful
	'J'	24-10-62	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	No meeting
	'R'	25-10-62	100	P	P	6	A	Yes	Yes	Successful
'S'	'R'	27- 9-62	30	A	P	1	P	No	No	Partially successful
	'B'	28- 9-62	25	A	P	Nil	P	No	No	Partially successful
	'Th'	13-10-62	30	A	P	Nil	P	No	No	do
	'Du'	14-10-62	15	A	P	1	P	No	No	do
	'N'	19-10-62	25	A	P	Nil	P	No	No	do
	'Do'	22-10-62	20	A	P	1	A	No	No	do
	'De'	25-10-62	16	A	P	Nil	P	No	No	do

* A stands for absent, and P for present (most gram sabhas were held in the evening hours, often stretching til. he early morning hours of the following day.)

GLOSSARY

gram sabha—assembly of the adult residents of the villages that constitute a panchayat area
mahila mandals—women clubs
nyaya panch—member nyaya panchayat
nyaya panchayat—people's representative judicial court at the grass root level
panch—elected member of a panchayat
panchayat—first unit in the three tier structure of panchayati raj at the village level
panchayat samiti—second unit in the three tier structure of panchayati raj at the block level
pradhan—elected head of panchayat samiti
pramukh—elected head of zila parishad
sarpanch—elected head of panchayat
vikas adhikari—popularly known as B.D.O. (Block Development Officer) who is the chief executive at the panchayat samiti level
Yuvak mandals—youth clubs
zila parishad—third unit in the three tier structure of panchayati raj at the district level

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